



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 06824330 6



James Lenox.





HELP TO ZION'S TRAVELLERS:

BEING AN ATTEMPT TO REMOVE
VARIOUS STUMBLING BLOCKS OUT OF THE WAY,
RELATING TO
DOCTRINAL, EXPERIMENTAL, AND
PRACTICAL RELIGION.

BY ROBERT HALL,
(LATE OF ARNSBY.)
WITH
A RECOMMENDATORY PREFACE BY DR. RYLAND.

The meek will he guide in judgment.—Psalm. xxv. 9.

Third Edition.

WITH AN ORIGINAL INTRODUCTORY PREFACE.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY WHITTINGHAM AND ROWLAND,
Goswell Street;

FOR W. BULTON AND SON, PATERNOSTER ROW; AND
L. JAMES, BRISTOL.

1815.



ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE READER.

THE substance of the following attempt to relieve discouraged christians, was delivered in a sermon at an annual association, held at Northampton, May 26, 1779, and was by the Ministers and Messengers of the churches desired to be printed. But most of the said Ministers, and many of my friends, apprehending afterwards that the great variety and vast importance of the subjects attended to, would not admit of their being properly treated in so small a compass as that of a sermon, they requested that the plan might be enlarged, and the ideas expanded; and advised to print it by subscription.

This proposal I could not immediately comply with, as it materially differed from, and greatly exceeded, what was at first desired; and therefore I resolved not to publish in any form, till the sense of the associate brethren could be taken. Accordingly at their next annual meeting, I gave my reasons why I had not complied with their request; of which they approved, and earnestly desired the last-mentioned plan might be adopted and pursued.

I should not perhaps have mentioned the above, only for the satisfaction of those who have complained of the long delay. Being in a state of entire suspense for one year, and waiting to collect the names of subscribers afterwards, *were the chief, though not the only reasons of the publication being postponed; for various providential occurrences have contributed to the delay.*

Respecting what I have written, I have only to say, the establishment of truth, the relief of distressed souls, the increase of brotherly love among the godly of every denomination, delight in the adorable and boundless perfections of the great Jehovah, Father, Son, and Spirit, and conformity to his righteous will, are the ends I have had in view, and which I earnestly wish may be accomplished. But whether the manner of treating the several subjects be calculated to answer such purposes, I cannot say. I am habitually afraid, lest truth should suffer through my weakness, and on that account have often repented that I complied with the request of my friends. However, having been greatly perplexed with most of the difficulties referred to, I am not without hope that the communication of what has been relieving to my own mind, may be of use to others in similar exercises, through the blessing of God, which it is earnestly desired may attend every reader. And for which end may each one endeavour to lift up his heart unto him who hath said, *The meek he will guide in judgment, and teach his way.* Finally, brethren, pray for me, that I may live under the influence of truth, and in the prospect of eternal glory!

ROBERT HALL.

ARNSEY, Leicestershire,
May 21, 1781.

PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

SEVENTY-EIGHT years have elapsed since that sermon was delivered, in my Father's Pulpit, at Hampton, before the Baptist Association, which *Hall* afterwards enlarged into the following treatise. As I then united with many others earnestly soliciting its publication, so I have repeatedly perused it with much satisfaction. Hence, therefore, the Publisher of the present edition applied to me for a recommendatory preface, I felt no hesitation but what arose from early impressions of veneration for one of the best and best of men, to whom I was habituated to look up with such respect, as made this office to me assuming and arrogant. But when I reflect that he has been removed from our world more than sixteen years, (and verily I miss no more !) and consider that, since his decease, *we have joined our churches, who never had opportunity duly to appreciate his worth ; it seems*

not to be taking too much upon me, to testify in what high estimation he was justly held by those who had the pleasure of his acquaintance. Strong natural powers, ardent piety, deep exercises of mind, a series of singular and sanctified trials, with a special unction from the Holy One, rendered him a man of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord.

Deeply convinced of human guilt and depravity, and very zealous for the honour of sovereign grace ; but no less concerned for internal holiness and practical religion ; he was careful to walk in the midst of the paths of judgment, and to beware of turning aside to the right hand or the left.

Open to conviction, and willing to follow the light of Revelation, let it lead him whithersoever it would, he believed that, about fourteen years before his death, he had formed a more excellent way of solving some theological difficulties, than he had adopted in the earlier part of his ministry.

He called no man upon earth master, in respect of his religious sentiments, but he took a peculiar delight in the writings of president EDWARDS; and two Sermons by Mr. *Smalley*, (which I borrowed of our venerable friend Mr. *Newton of Olney*, and after transcribing them, lent them to Mr. *Hall*;) contributed much to strengthen his

conviction, that the *moral impotence* of Sinners is no more an excuse for their slighting the *Call of the Gospel*, than it is for their violating the *Commands of the Law*. As the greatest disinclination to regard divine *Authority* cannot release a rational creature from an obligation to obey God's *precepts*; so the utter aversion of a sinner, to regard the *kindness* of God our Saviour, cannot release him from an obligation thankfully to comply with his *Invitations*.

At the same time, Mr. *Hall* remained as strenuous an advocate as ever for the necessity and efficacy of divine Influence, to induce sinners or saints to comply cordially with their indispensable Duty; and he was the more abundantly confirmed in a belief of the sovereign freeness of Grace, by reflecting that the inexcusable Perverseness of the human heart, which renders the agency of the divine Spirit so necessary, must at the same time evince that we are utterly unworthy of his gracious interposition. The greater is our reluctance to come unto God, in the way which he has prescribed for our return, the more undeserving are we of being drawn unto him by his Holy Spirit.

But this excellent man remarked, that if the

evangelical truth, which appeared to him fully to accord with the sacred standard.

On one particular, which many readers might expect Mr. *Hall* to have noticed, he has hardly touched, viz. *the denial of the Law of God as a rule of conduct to Believers*. This Sentiment he ever considered as so gross a piece of *Antinomianism*, that he did not suppose any man could embrace it, whose conscience was not seared as with a hot iron. The eminent Divines, who verged to an extreme respecting the obligation of sinners to repent and believe the Gospel, would have reprobated *this* Doctrine as tending to the greatest Licentiousness. Dr. *Gill*, Mr. *Brine*, Mr. *Toplady*, &c. utterly condemned so vile a sentiment. But within the last twenty years how many who exclaimed against Mr. *Hall* and his brethren, for embracing *new* sentiments respecting the *Duty of Sinners*, have readily departed from their former guides, and embraced *new* notions respecting the *Duty of Believers*.

To me it appears a most marvellous instance of the Deceitfulness of Sin, if any man can think *himself* a friend to evangelical Religion, who *by sinking unbelievers below all Obligation, and raising believers above all Obligation, almost anni-*

lates both Duty and Sin, and so leave no room for the exercise of either pardoning Mercy or rectifying Grace. The apostolic axiom, where there is no Law there is no Transgression, justly leads us to conclude, that they who are below or above Law have no guilt, and need no Saviour : there is no room to shew the riches of his Grace, the efficacy of his Blood, in the pardon of those who never deserved punishment. If the command be exceedingly narrow, our sins must be very few, and the pardon of them a small matter. And if the *effectual Influence* of the Spirit be supposed to be the source, rule, and measure of Obligation, no one can have reason to turn for sin ; since he always does as much as he was powerfully inclined to do, and by this disposition it was not his Duty to do any more. Thus sinless Perfection is easily attained, though the backward way ; not by coming up to the standard of Rectitude, but by bringing it down to our level. Most comfortable Doctrine to a sinful heart !

The first Edition of this excellent work was very incorrectly printed. This will I trust be much improved, by the care of my *dear Brother, the Editor*, who is endeared

to me by the friendship of forty years, (for very near so long since we were baptized together at Northampton) and by many correct made by the Author himself, as well as by addition of a clear Analysis. May God in the re-printing of it, to lead many more fully the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, is the ear Prayer of

The Reader's cordial Friend,
and Servant for Christ's sake,

JOHN RYLAND

PREFACE

TO THE THIRD EDITION.

AN aversion to religious controversy may arise from two causes, in their nature the most opposite ; a contempt of religion itself, or a high degree of devotional feeling. They who consider the objects of religion as visionary and uncertain, or who, rejecting revelation, feel their inability to find a place where they may fix their footing, will naturally feel an emotion of contempt for theological contests, similar to that which we should experience towards men who were fighting for possessions in the air.

There are not a few who would engage with the utmost seriousness and ardour in a dispute on the nature and effects of paper currency, who would be ashamed of being suspected of directing their attention for a moment to the most weighty questions in theology. Attentive to all the aspects and combinations of the material and of the political world, they are accustomed to regard religion as a

sort of Utopia, a land of shadow and of fiction, where, wrapt in pleasing vision, credulity reposes on the lap of imposture. This sort of persons are so completely overcome by the enchantments of the present state, so intirely devoted to the wisdom which St. James denominates earthly and sensual, that they are incapable of being impressed with a conviction of the possibility of a higher order of objects, or a more elevated and refined condition of being, than that with which they are conversant, and though they may possess a subtle and penetrating genius, they are not less disqualified for religious inquiries than an idiot or an infant. *They mind earthly things.*

How far the indisposition to religious controversy, which prevails at present, may be justly described to this Sadducean temper, I shall not pretend to determine. It is certain, however, that in some this indisposition proceeds from a better cause. While the former class of persons think religion not worth disputing about, there are others who conceive it to be a subject too sacred for dispute. They wish to confine it to silent meditation, to sweeten solitude, to inspire devotion, to guide the *practice, and purify the heart, and never to appear in public but in the character of the authentic*

interpreter of the will of Heaven. They conceive it degraded whenever it is brought forward to combat on the arena. We are fully convinced, that a disputatious humour is unfavourable to piety ; and, that controversies in religion have often been unnecessarily multiplied and extended ; but how they can be dispensed with altogether, we are at a loss to discover, until some other method is discovered of confuting error, than sound and solid argument. As we no longer live in times (God be thanked !) when coercion can be employed, or when any individual, or any body of men, are invested with that authority which could silence disputes by an oracular decision, there appears no possibility of maintaining the interests of truth, without having recourse to temperate and candid controversy. Perhaps the sober use of this weapon may not be without its advantages, even at the present season. Prone as we are to extremes, may there not be some reason to apprehend, we have passed from that propensity to magnify every difference subsisting amongst christians, to a neglect of just discrimination, to a habit of contemplating the christian system as one in which there is little or nothing *remains to be explored*? Let us cultivate the most *cordial esteem* for all that love the Lord Jesus

Christ in sincerity. Let us anxiously guard against that asperity and contempt which have too often mingled with theological debates, but let us aim at the same time, to acquire and retain the most accurate conceptions of religious truth. Every improvement in the knowledge of Christ and the mysteries of his Gospel, will abundantly compensate for the labour and attention necessary to its attainment.

However unhappily controversies have too often been conducted, the assistance they have afforded in the discovery of truth, is not light or inconsiderable. Not to mention the Reformation, which was principally effected by controversy, how many truths have by this means been set in a clearer view; and, while the unhappy passions it has awakened have subsided, the light struck out in the collision has been retained and perpetuated.

As the physical powers are scarcely ever exerted to their utmost extent, but in the order of combat, so intellectual acumen has been displayed to the most advantage, and to the most effect, in the contests of argument. The mind of a controversialist warmed and agitated, is turned to all quarters, and leaves none of its resources unemployed in the *invention of arguments*, tries every weapon, and *explores the hidden recesses* of a subject with an

intense vigilance and an ardour which it is next to impossible in a calmer state of mind to command. Disingenuous arts are often resorted to, personalities are mingled, and much irritative matter is introduced; but it is the business of the attentive observer to separate these from the question at issue, and to form an impartial judgment of the whole. In a word, it may be truly affirmed that the evils occasioned by controversy are transient, the good it produces is permanent.

These observations I beg leave to submit to the reader, as an apology for the republication of a treatise which is confessedly controversial. Coinciding with the venerable author in the general aim and drift of the following sheets, I am far from pledging myself to the approbation and support of every position contained in them, nor would I be understood to attach all the importance to some of the points in discussion, which they appear in his estimation to have possessed.

If there be any impression, in the following Treatise, which implies that the questions at issue betwixt the Calvinists and Arminians are of the nature of *fundamentals*, (of which, however, I am *not aware*) I beg leave, as far as they are concerned, to express my explicit dissent; being fully satisfied

that upon either system the foundations of human hope remain unshaken, and that there is nothing in the contrariety of views entertained on these subjects, which ought to obstruct the most cordial affection and harmony among christians.

Having no pecuniary interest in this work, I may, perhaps, be allowed with the more freedom to communicate my opinion of its merit. I am much mistaken if the candid reader will not perceive in the author, an impartial love of truth, together with a degree of ingenuity and acuteness in its illustration and defence, not always to be met with in theological discussions.

The sentiments of my honoured father were decidedly Calvinistic. His object, however, in the following Treatise, was not so much to recommend that system in general, as to disengage it from certain excrescences, which he considered as weakening its evidence and impairing its beauty. On reviewing his religious tenets during the latter years of his life, and impartially comparing them with the scriptures, he was led to discard some opinions which he had formerly embraced, and which he afterwards came to consider as having a *pernicious tendency*.

From the moral impotence which the oracles o

truth ascribe to man in his fallen state, a certain class of divines were induced to divide moral and religious duties into two classes, natural and spiritual ; comprehending under the latter, those which require spiritual, or supernatural assistance to their performance ; and under the former, those which demand no such assistance. Agreeable to this distinction, they conceived it to be the duty of all men to abstain from the outward acts of sin, to read the Scriptures, to frequent the worship of God, and to attend with serious assiduity to the means of grace ; but they supposed that repentance, faith in Christ, and the exercise of genuine internal devotion, were obligatory only on the regenerate. Hence their ministry consisted almost entirely of an exhibition of the peculiar mysteries of the gospel, with few or no addresses to the unconverted. They conceived themselves not warranted to urge them to repent and believe the gospel, those being spiritual duties, from whose obligation they were released by the inability contracted by the fall.

These conclusions were evidently founded upon two assumptions ; first, that the impotence which the Scriptures ascribe to the unregenerate is free from blame, so as to excuse them from all the

duties to which it extends. In opposition to this, the Author of the following Treatise has proved, in a very satisfactory manner, that the inability under which the unconverted labour, is altogether of a moral nature, consisting in the corruption of the will, or an aversion to things of a spiritual and divine nature, that it is in itself criminal, and that so far from affording an excuse for what would otherwise be duty, it stamps with its own character all its issues and productions.

In considering the moral character of an action, we are naturally led to inquire into its motive, and according as that is criminal, laudable, or indifferent, to characterise the action whence it proceeds. The motive, however, appears no otherwise entitled to commendation, than as it indicates the disposition of the agent ; so that in analyzing the elements of moral character, we can ascend no higher than to the consideration of the disposition, or the state of the will and of the affections, as constituting the essence of that portion of virtue or of vice which we respectively ascribe to it. To proceed farther will only involve us in a circle, since to whatever we might trace the disposition in question, should we *be induced, for example,* to ascribe it to the free *exercise of the will,* that exercise would fall under

the same predicament, and be considered either as virtuous or vicious, according to the disposition whence it proceeds. When the Scriptures have placed the inability of mankind to yield holy and acceptable obedience in an evil disposition, or in blindness and hardness of heart, they have conducted us to the ultimate point on this subject, and have established the doctrine of human criminality upon a basis which cannot be shaken or disturbed, without confounding the first principles of moral discrimination. Though it is manifest this impotence is entirely of a moral nature, totally distinct from the want of natural faculties, it is equally evident, that to whatever extent it exists, while it actually subsists, it is as an effectual impediment to the performance of holy actions as any physical privation whatever, and on that account, and that alone, may, without absurdity, be styled an *inability*. This important distinction was not altogether unknown to our earlier divines, though they neglected to avail themselves of it as fully as they ought. It is clearly stated by the great Mr. Howe in his *Blessedness of the Righteous*, as well as adverted to by Mr. Baxter in several of his practical works. *But the earliest regular treatise on this subject it has been my lot to meet with, was the*

production of Mr. Towman, an eminent nonconformist divine. In his dissertation on moral impotence, as he styles it, he has anticipated the most important arguments of succeeding writers, and has evinced, throughout, a most masterly acquaintance with his subject. This work is mentioned in terms of high respect by Nelson, in his Life of Bishop Bull, who remarks that his thoughts were original, and that he had hit upon a method of defending Calvinism against the objections of Bull and of others, peculiar to himself. His claim to perfect originality, however, was not so well founded as Nelson supposed. Since his time the subject has been fully discussed by the celebrated Jonathan Edwards, in his Treatise on the Will, and the distinction defended with all the depth and precision peculiar to that amazing genius.

Another principle assumed as a basis by the high Calvinists, is that the same things cannot be the duty of man, and the gift of God ; or, in other words, that what is matter of promise can on no occasion be the matter of obligation. The Scriptures frequently affirm faith and repentance to be the gift of God ; hence it is concluded that they *cannot be obligatory* on the unregenerate, a conclusion *diametrically opposed* to innumerable passages

in the Old and New Testament, which insist, in the most peremptory style, on true conversion and a lively faith as the most essential duties, which other passages are equally express in exhibiting as matter of promise. *A new heart will I give them,* says the Lord by Ezekiel, *and a new spirit will I put within them, and I will take away the heart of stone and give them an heart of flesh ;* the same prophet cries, *Make yourselves a new heart, for why will ye die, ye house of Israel?* in exact accordance with the language of St. James, *wash your hearts ye sinners, and cleanse your hearts ye double-minded.* The burden of our Saviour's ministry, as well as that of his forerunner, was, *Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand ;* while St. Peter, who perfectly knew the genius of Christianity, affirms that Christ is *exalted to give repentance and the remission of sins.* *Circumcise your hearts,* said Moses, *and be no longer stiff-necked ;* the same Moses had been previously commissioned to declare, *the Lord thy God shall circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed.* Now the circumcision of the heart we are taught by St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, to regard as the distinguishing feature of the truly regenerate — *of him who is a Jew inwardly,*

whose praise is not of man but of God. Whoever impartially weighs the import of these scriptures, must be convinced that the same things are in *fact*, matter of command and the subject of promise, and must consequently be prepared to acquiesce in the decision of infinite wisdom on this subject, however much he may be at a loss to explain or account for it. The consistency of the promises and of the commands in question, arises from the matter of each being of a moral nature. If we will allow ourselves to reflect, we shall perceive that the will, and the will only, is the proper object of command, and that an agent is no otherwise accountable, or susceptible of moral government, than as he is the subject of voluntary powers; we shall also perceive that the disordered state of the will, or the radical indisposition of an agent to comply with legitimate commands, which is the same thing, by no means exempts him from their obligation, nor tends in the least degree to render the addressing such commands to him absurd or improper. That they will not be complied with, while that disordered state subsists, is true, but legitimate commands, enforced by proper sanctions, *are amongst the strongest motives; that is, they tend in their own nature to incline the will, and*

therefore they cannot be withheld, without virtually relinquishing the claim of authority and dominion. This may suffice to evince the propriety of issuing commands, notwithstanding the known and radical indisposition to comply; or, which comes to the same thing, whatever be the *state of the will*. With respect to the other side of the supposed contradiction, what can be plainer than that the will as well as every other faculty of the mind, is under divine controul, and that God can with infinite ease, in what instances, and in what manner he please, so change and modify it, as to induce a prompt and cheerful compliance with his requisition? What should prevent him, at whose disposal are the hearts of the mightiest of men, *to make his people willing in the day of his power?*

It is instructive as well as amusing, to trace the coincidence which is often found betwixt systems which appear at first view at the utmost variance from each other. The grosser Arminians and Pelagians contend, that it is the duty of all men to repent and believe, because all possess an inherent power of so doing, without special or supernatural assistance. The high Calvinists, on the contrary, deny that *any man in a state of unregeneracy is under an obligation to perform those duties, be-*

cause they are *not* possessed of the requisite ability. Thus both concur in making moral ability the measure of obligation ; a position which, when the terms are accurately defined and cleared of their ambiguity, conduct us to this very extraordinary conclusion, that men are obliged to just as much of duty as they are inclined to. On these and other points connected with them, the reader, if we are not mistaken, will find much solid instruction in the following Treatise, accompanied with such a constant attention to the great end of theological discussion, the promotion of practical piety, as can scarcely fail of affording high satisfaction to serious minds. To this Treatise, and to another on a similar subject, by my excellent and judicious friend Mr. Fuller, the Dissenters in general, and the Baptists in particular, are under great obligations for emancipating them from the fetters of prejudice, and giving free scope to the publication of the gospel. By these means a considerable revolution has been effected in the sentiments of the denomination to which I have the honour to belong : the excrescences of Calvinism have been cut off ; the points of defence have been diminished in *number and better fortified* ; truth has shone forth *with brighter lustre*, and the ministry of the gospel

rendered more simple, more practical, and
efficacious.

reply to such as may object to the metaphysical subtlety which pervades some parts of the wing Treatise, I would avail myself of the dissonance admirably illustrated by the author of the Essay of Nature pursued*. He observes, that though metaphysical reasoning rarely, if ever, conduces to the discovery of truth, it is of great advantage in the detection of sophistry, and that the obscurity and confusion in which moral subjects have been involved, by crude and undigested metaphysics, can only be exploded by the temperate use of that which is true and genuine; so that the praise of metaphysics is the cure of its own evils, and the repair of the mischief which itself has wrought. The reader will observe, that the author employs metaphysics, not to rear the fabric of a system, which can only be effected by a profound reliance on inspiration, but to demolish a rotten superstitution which conceals its beauty. For the want of elegance or polish, discernible in the following sheets, it will be sufficient apology to inform the reader, that the author, destitute of the advantages of early education, had no other

* Abraham Tucker.

resources to depend upon, in his religious inquiries, than what were derived from the vigour of his understanding, and his unbiassed integrity of heart. Had he enjoyed the benefit of literary culture, he would have undoubtedly written in a style and manner more adapted to gain the attention of the superior classes: whether his reasoning would have been more cogent, or his method of handling his subject better fitted for the instruction of plain serious christians, for whose benefit he principally laboured, is more questionable.

Gratitude and veneration compel me to add, that with all the imperfections of the work, and the disadvantages under which the author of it laboured, I shall ever esteem it one of the greatest favours an indulgent Providence has conferred upon me, to have possessed such a father, whom in all the essential features of character it will be my humble ambition to imitate, though conscious it must ever be

—— Haud passibus æquis.

Sept. 1814.

R. H.

HELP

TO

ZION'S TRAVELLERS, &c.

ISAIAH lvii. 14.

**CAST YE UP, CAST YE UP, PREPARE THE WAY, TAKE
UP THE STUMBLING-BLOCK OUT OF THE WAY OF MY
PEOPLE.**

THESE words seem to have been the language of those who in a time of general declension adhered to God and religion, and in every difficulty and danger trusted in the Lord, being encouraged by his precious promises as mentioned in the preceding verse. Knowing by mournful experience the various obstacles and intricacies which annoy and perplex the heavenly traveller in times of distress and obscurity, they are represented as saying on behalf of the *discouraged and entangled*, to those who were en-

ployed in the ways of Zion, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, &c.

Whether the text be considered as historical or prophetical, as a relation of what was the request of the godly in the days of the prophet, or a prediction of what would be solicited in some future period, it is evident from the words that the people of God are represented as on a journey, seeking a better country, which is an heavenly, therefore are frequently called strangers, and pilgrims on the earth : that the way in which they are to walk is not at all times easy to be discovered, and when obscurity attends the path, hesitation prevents a progress. Hence the servants of the Lord are called upon to cast up and prepare the way, to render it more visible and obvious to every spiritual passenger, to see that it be raised or elevated and thereby rendered safe, even when floods of persecution and temptation abound, and made as plain as possible, by the removal of every thing tending to injure the weak or benighted traveller : therefore it is added, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people ; this desire, this request seems to be represented as the personal and united wish of every good man, whether in the days of the prophet or in future periods of time. For thus saith *the Lord*, *he that putteth his trust in me shall say, Cast ye up, Cast ye up, prepare the way,*

take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people.

Though stumbling-block is mentioned only in the singular, as if pointing to some one danger or difficulty to be removed, yet it is evident from scripture, that various things are so denominated ; but the singular number being only used in the words, may denote the dreadful nature and dangerous tendency of the doctrine and practice of idolatry, which was the stumbling-block Balaam taught Balak to cast before the children of Israel, and against which the prophet in this chapter had been bearing his testimony. The doctrine of idolatry in its different forms has been, and continues to be, a fatal stumbling-block to many ; hence the church of Pergamos was censured for keeping in her community them that held the doctrine of Balaam ; Rev. ii. 14. Again, if the text be considered as the language of every believer, it may refer to, or include whatever was, or may be found of a stumbling nature to each of them. The experiences of Christians are very different respecting what is, or has been, to them of a trying perplexing nature ; and as each Christian is ready to fear what has been the principal stumbling-block to him may be the same to others, it is natural to suppose, that as every heart knows its own bitterness, each tried believer *would thus express himself*, and in reference to

mony and consistency of divine revelation, and readily allow that inferiority and equality are opposites, and that in the sense in which Christ is spoken of as inferior, he is not, cannot be equal with God.

But as in the person of Christ two distinct natures are united, in consequence of which he is Immanuel, God with us ; therefore it does not follow, because he has a nature inferior to God, yea even to angels, that his superior nature is not properly divine. Ten thousand testimonies in proof of his humanity do not in the least degree enervate his claim to deity : a very small attention to the subject under consideration, is sufficient to discover the fallaciousness of such reasoning as the above. For those who maintain the divinity of the blessed Saviour, as firmly believe him to be properly man, as they do who deny him to be God over all.

It is our unspeakable felicity, that the Son of God was sent into the world as a Mediator, to make peace between Jehovah in his public character as a governor, and rebellious men, that the Lord God might dwell among them, and they with him. In order to accomplish which, it was necessary he should assume human nature and dwell among us. To reconcile God and man, it *was needful he should be a middle person possessing the nature of both, and as equally interested in*

favour of each party, be able to establish heaven's righteous claim, and raise self-ruined man to a state of safety, dignity, and delight.

Considered as a complex person, he kindly condescended to act on our behalf in office capacity, as if inferior to Deity. For as Mediator he acted as under the direction and commission of his father; and as such was God's servant, though his son; therefore said, of himself he could do nothing: not through the want of ability, but being under official obligations to adhere to his father's directions. Though an ambassador can do nothing of himself, but is bound in duty to act in all things in conformity to his instructions; yet it is not from thence inferible that his nature, ability, or mental powers are inferior to those of his sovereign, for the restriction or limitation is not the effect of personal debility, but of office capacity. The blessed Jesus is therefore not only inferior to God as man, but as mediator; nevertheless inferiority in office does not prove, nor imply, an inferiority of nature. Nay, on the contrary, the errand on which he came, and the work assigned him to perform, were so infinitely important, awful, and arduous, that he could not have discharged his trust without the power and penetration of Deity. Hence he appealed to his *works in proof of his divine mission*, likewise as *evidences of his filial relation to God*, in such

a sense as exposed him to the charge of blasphemy ; had he not been properly divine ; John x. 24 to 38. His true dignity as a divine person being inferible from what he did, his enemies were on that account inexcusable, because his works sufficiently demonstrated to every honest inquiring mind, who he was, as well as from whence he came, though it was inconsistent with his then state of humiliation and debasement, to allow the glories of divinity to shine forth in their native lustre and infinite splendour ; hence he repeatedly charged his friends not to publish to the world who he was, till after his resurrection from the dead. That he was a man, his enemies knew as well as his disciples ; yea, some of them thought him to be the promised Messiah, and said one to another, this is the heir, let us kill him ; but as a divine person they knew him not, for had they known him they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. For the principal charge brought against him, and for which he was condemned was, that being a man he made himself equal with God ; John v. 18. chap. xix. 7.

If Christ exposed himself to death through ambiguity, how did he witness a good confession at Pilate's bar ? If he did not mean an equality with *God*, which the Jews thought he did, strange that *his regard to truth* did not lead to an explanation *of what he intended*.

It is no wonder the priests and others in that day of prevalent ignorance and perverseness, should have a secret conviction of his office, capacity as Messiah, without an idea of his divinity, seeing some under the profession of gospel ministers, acknowledge and plead for his divine mission, and yet oppose and reject with contempt the idea of his being a divine person.

How kind and wonderful the condescension of the blessed Jesus, that he should stoop to take upon him human nature (not as when in its original dignity, but in its debased state) in order to suffer, and serve in favour of those who would, he knew, on that very account rob him of his reputation, as a divine person! It is mournful to think he should be despised on earth for that, on the account of which he is admired in heaven.

Consider the complex capacity of the adorable Jesus as God, and as man, with his acting as mediator, in consequence of such an union of distinct natures, and then the scripture account of his inferiority and subjection to the divine Father will appear quite consonant with the doctrine of his true and proper divinity; and the stumbling-block aforesaid be totally removed. But when the aforesaid is removed, behold another is with equal art thrown in the way of the ignorant and unwary, which is (2.) a perversion of the terms

used in treating of this important subject. In consequence of such unwarrantable, not to say unmanly craft, the *unity* of the divine *essence* is represented to be so evidently inconsistent with a *plurality* of divine *persons*, as if it was universally agreed to consider them as absolute contradictions, and to convey irreconcilable ideas; whereas it is very well known that those who believe the divinity of the blessed Jesus (and the Holy Ghost) as firmly maintain the unity of the divine essence, or that there is only one God, as they do who oppose a plurality of divine persons. Yet things are so represented as if they and the Trinitarians agreed in that about which they differ, and again as if they differed about that in which they are agreed; for the consistency between a plurality of *persons* in the one divine *essence*, is the very thing for which those contend who believe the divinity of Christ. And that there is but one living and true God, both parties unite and agree in acknowledging. The doctrines of *unity* in the divine *essence*, and a *plurality* of *persons*, are in their very nature distinct, and ought never to be confounded. But that they are opposites and inconsistent in reference to God, has not yet been proved, and I believe never will. But though the adversaries of Christ's *divinity* oppose the one to the other, as if they were allowed contrarieties; yet by and by they

will treat those very terms by which the doctrines are distinguished, as if they were intended to express the same thing, or convey similar ideas. Hence, if the *essence* of God be the subject treated of, the term *person* is immediately substituted, as if synonymous with that of *essence*, and then with an air of triumph it is inferred, that, *If God be one, he is not two or three.* Again, if the doctrine of divine *personality* be the matter of *immediate* consideration, and scriptural proofs be adduced in support of a *plurality* of PERSONS *truly divine*, behold the idea of *essence* is by them substituted in the room of *person*, and *unity* instead of *plurality*, and by the help of such a *substitution* and perversion of terms, and *shuffle* of ideas, they very gravely exclaim against Tritheism, i. e. the doctrine of three Gods. As the friends of Christ's divinity never assert God to be *three* in the sense in which he is *one*, nor *one* in the *same sense* in which he is *three*, but *perpetually* distinguish between a *plurality* of *persons* and the *unity* of *God*, the methods taken as aforesaid are disingenuous, contemptible, mean, and even beneath notice, were it not that thereby inattentive minds are *imposed* upon, the opposition to the Redeemer's *dignity* is supported, and weak Christians are *stumbled*.

It is evident, however, beyond contradiction, that according to the scriptures there was a plu-

rality of persons *antecedent* to creation, for in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God, the same was in the beginning with God; all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made; John i. 1, 2, 3: that glorious person who was *with* God was therefore *distinct* from him with whom he was, and yet of the same nature, being one in essence with the Father. For the word was God, and that Jesus Christ is intended by the word who was in the beginning with God, and the author of creation, is plain from verse 10. He was in the world, and the world was made by him. Again, verse 14, The word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. As he was before all things, so by him all things consist; Col. i. 17. He was with the Father from everlasting, and all that is done in time is according to the eternal purpose which the Father purposed in him. Hence God chose his people in him, committed them to his care in the everlasting covenant, and promised eternal life in him before the world began. Many instances might be given of Christ's existence before his incarnation, as he said, before Abraham was, I am; John viii. 58. *The plural pronouns used in scripture by the great Eternal when speaking of acts, authority,*

and properties peculiar to deity, are striking proofs of a plurality of persons in one essence. God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; Gen. i. 26. Behold the man is become like one of us; chap. iii. 22. Let us go down and confound their language; chap. xi. 7. Whom shall I send, who will go for us? Isaiah vi.

And respecting all other objects of worship, Jehovah's language is, Produce your cause, saith the Lord, bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob; let them shew the former things what they be, that *we* may consider them. We declare *us* things to come that *we* may know at ye are Gods; yea, do good or do evil, that *we* may be dismayed, and behold it together. Isaiah xli. 21, 22, 23. Again, to stain the pride of man and curb human arrogance, he asserts his divine prerogative in the following solemn and instructive interrogations. Who hath declared from the beginning, that *we* may know? And *fore* time, that *we* may say he is righteous? I beheld and there was no man, no counsellor, that when I asked them could answer a word; Isaiah i. 26, 28. From these and many more instances which might be produced, it is evident, that there is a plurality of persons in the one eternal God, even the Father, the Word, and the only Ghost, and that these three are one. *Am*

the name of which sacred three the holy ordinance of baptism was ordered to be administered.

The adversaries of Christ's divinity being conscious, that the scriptures treat of a plurality of persons employed in creation, &c. and lest the artful manner of treating the argument respecting person and essence as aforesaid should not block up the way leading to the divine glories of Jesus, have invented another stumbling-block to render the path of faith in Christ's divinity quite impassable, which is (3.) the pre-existence of Christ's soul. It is acknowledged some have maintained this sentiment without any designed injury to the doctrine of the Trinity. But it is equally evident that some of the most virulent enemies to Christ's divine personality, find it impossible to give their scheme of opposition even the *appearance* of consistency, but as *aided* by the aforesaid hypothesis; therefore *great* pains have been taken to render it plausible, in consequence of which it has proved a stumbling-block to some.

But that it was not a human soul which existed with the father before time, and which made the world, and to which God spake, saying, Let us make man, &c. &c. but his own infinitely *glorious* Son, will appear, if the following things *be duly considered*. He who was with the fa-

ther, was with him from everlasting, rejoicing always before him, and whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting; Mic. v. 2, and who should be called, though clothed with humanity, the Everlasting Father, the mighty God. Isaiah ix. 6. But it is absurd to suppose a creature to have existed *before* time began. Every creature *once* was not; to suppose a creature always to have been, is to form an idea of a creature which was never created; all things were made by Jesus Christ, without him nothing was made that was made; but according to the aforesaid opinion, there was a creature made which Jesus Christ was no ways concerned in the formation of; for a creature cannot be thought to have created itself, without absurdly supposing it to have been before it was, to exist prior to its existence, or to act whilst it was nothing, in order to be something, the above absurdities are unavoidable; if the scripture account of the creation (as the production of a plurality of persons) be credited, and the divinity of Christ be denied.

As a soul could not create itself, so neither could it be the author of the other parts of the creation, which Jesus Christ is positively declared to be. For by him were all things created *that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or*

dominions, principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him; Col. i. 16. If a human soul be the author of creation, various creatures would be above their creator. Angels, for instance, would be superior to their Maker, and excel him in strength; for man (which Christ is asserted only to be) is naturally inferior to those celestial spirits. Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; which supposes the angels were, when his humanity was made; Heb. ii. 7. The acknowledgment of Christ as creator, renders the denial of his proper divinity inexcusable, and saps the foundation of not only revealed but natural religion; for, if Jesus be the former of all things, the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse who glorify him not as God; Rom. i. 20, 21. Some assert that Christ was only an instrument in creation; but creation work was of such a *nature*, as to *exclude* the idea of an *instrumental* creator. An instrument, if concerned at all, must have been employed either *before* or *after* the *production* of being, for there was no medium. Not *before*, because prior to *creation* there was not *any thing* existing for an *instrument to act upon*, or to be employed about. Not *after*, because when a creature does exist,

it is too late for an *instrument* to be employed in *producing* it. Nothing short of infinite agency could possibly be concerned in creation; the persons so engaged were properly divine, and essentially one. However, that there was no instrument concerned is beyond all dispute, if what Jehovah says be duly regarded; for he declares there was none such with him; Prov. viii.; Mic. v. 2. Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb; I am the Lord that maketh all things, that stretcheth out the heavens ALONE, that spreadeth abroad the earth BY MYSELF; Isaiah xlv. 24. Which ALONE spreadeth out the heavens; Job ix. 8. Hence it appears, that though there were distinct persons employed in creation, yet they were so united as to be included in the one all-creating Jehovah.

4thly, To render the scheme of opposition to Christ's divinity more consistent, and the idea of the soul existing before time, instead of the Son of God, less exceptionable; it has been thought proper to exclude the body from being an essential constituent part of a man. Such an exclusion to be sure was an happy thought, and quite necessary; for without it the all-creating creature would not have been properly either God, *angel*, or *man*. But that it might be considered as *belonging to some scale or class of being*, "It

“ is asserted to be a proper human person, a true
 “ and real man, the body being only a temporary
 “ covering for, but not a constituent part of hu-
 “ man nature.” But this method of depreciating
 the divine glories of the blessed Jesus will prove
 abortive, if the scripture account of human na-
 ture be attended to; and without doubt he who
 made man could best describe him. From the
 sacred pages we learn, that the Lord God formed
man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into
 his nostrils the breath of life, and *man* became
 a living soul; Gen. ii. 7: and that the rib which
 the Lord God had taken from man made he a
 woman; and Adam said, she shall be called wo-
 man, because she was taken *out of man*. Again,
 to Adam as a transgressor, the Lord said, Dust *thou*
 art, and unto dust shalt *thou* return; Gen. iii. 19.
Man shall return again to dust. Now as the
 soul was not formed of the dust, nor the rib of
 which Eve was made, taken out of the *soul*; but
 the *rib* from the *body*, and the body from the
ground; therefore the *body* must be a *constituent*
 part of *man*, for the body only returns to dust,
 and yet the Lord says *man* shall return thither;
 Job xxxiv. 15. Again the personal name of man
 is often given to the body, which would be im-
 proper if the body was not a part of the person.
Jacob in his affecting lamentation says, JOSEPH
 is without doubt rent in pieces. I will go down

into the grave unto my son mourning: thus his father wept for him; Gen. xxxvii. 33. 35. It was not the *soul*, but the *body* of his son which he concluded was torn asunder; nor his own soul, but his body, that would go down to the grave. And when the same patriarch was near death, he charged his sons, saying, Bury me with my fathers; in such a cave which he described; adding, there they buried *Abraham* and *Sarah* his wife; there they buried *Isaac* and *Rebecca* his wife, and there I buried *Leah*; Gen. xlix. 29. 31.

And that the body of *Christ* was an essential part of *his* humanity, is evident from what the angel said to his weeping friends. *He is not here, he is risen*: Come, see the place where the Lord lay; Matt. xxviii. 6. But if the body was no proper constituent part of his manhood, *he* never lay in the grave; nor did he ever rise from the dead, for *he* did not die. They did not nail *him* to the tree; the whole account of his *corporal* sufferings is a mere fiction—if it be true, that his body was not a proper constituent part of *himself*. In a word, there never will be a resurrection of any man, if *bodies* are not essential to human nature, and this world of men are quite as invisible to each other as the world of angels are. According to that notion, the sight of a man is a singular rarity. That a soul can exist without a body is readily allowed, but such a

separate existence is the effect of *death*; and can it be thought reasonable that Christ's first existence should be a state similar to that of the dead? Once more, on such a supposition Christ could not be the son of man in any sense, because his soul is said to exist before all men*; and his

* From a conviction of the singular absurdity attending the supposition of a creature existing from eternity, some have boldly asserted that *everlasting*, from which Christ is said to exist, only intends a measurable period, and therefore does not convey the idea of eternity, or unlimited duration. It is granted that by the term everlasting and eternal likewise, sometimes is intended no more than a very distant period, but that is not their native primary signification. But the natural meaning of the word is a perpetual existence, or infinite duration. Hence we read, the eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; Deut. xxxiii. 27. Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God? Hab. i. 12. If it be said the existence of Christ is limited, as being only from everlasting, or ever the earth was, and that, before the mountains were brought forth, or the highest part of the dust, were qualifying terms tending to establish a limited idea, therefore though Christ was from everlasting, yet not eternal; we answer, the Holy Ghost has taken care to guard his people against such Christ dishonouring sophistry: for Moses, the Man of God, when treating on Jehovah's eternity, and human mortality, says, Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth *and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God*; Psal. xc. 2. Again, thy throne is of old, thou *art from everlasting*. Psal. xciii. 2. See Mich. v. 2.

body not a part of his humanity. But he was the son of David, a descendant of Abraham, as the scriptures assert, and as the apostle to the Hebrews said, It is evident our Lord sprung out of Judah ; Heb. vii. 14. To conclude, the incarnation of Christ was not only considered by the great apostle as an instance of infinite condescension, but admired by him and every believer in his day, as being in its nature really inexplicable and truly mysterious ; they did not dispute the *fact*, though they could not conceive *how* divinity and humanity were united in one person ; but rejoiced in, and steadily supported, its reality as the pillar and ground of the truth. Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness : God was manifest in the flesh ; 1 Tim. iii. 15, 16. The word which was God was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us.

But if Christ be only a man, or a mere creature, the wonder ceases, for it cannot be thought a thing singular and surprising for a human soul to possess a body ; nor for God to manifest himself to a holy creature, and employ in his service a good man. It is truly lamentable and really astonishing, that any who wish to be saved by Jesus, should endeavour to sink his character and diminish his dignity. Yea, rejoice in hope of proving the Saviour infinitely unworthy of their *upreme love and delight*. You happy souls

who need, know and esteem the Redeemer, as infinitely powerful and divinely precious ; Oh, pity the condition, and dread the deception, of such, whose peace and pleasure rise *high* in consequence of the Saviour *sinking low* in their esteem. Pray for them, and take heed lest you also be tempted, and that your own faith may be firm in, and your love fervent to, the infinitely glorious and lovely Redeemer. Consider and frequently contemplate the proofs of his proper divinity, as recorded in the sacred volume. Such as the properties of which he is possessed, the work he has performed, the worship he has received from angels and men. The divine names and titles which are given him. The honours ascribed to him. The unlimited confidence placed in him by good men in every age. And the claims which are made by him ; for he who was never the subject of arrogance, thought it not robbery to be equal with God ; Phil. ii. 6. May the Lord grant that every reader may search the scriptures which testify of Jesus, with godly sincerity and gospel simplicity. To the upright, light shall rise in darkness. I might greatly enlarge : but it is hoped, that the above considerations may serve through the divine blessing to remove the common difficulties respecting the *true knowledge of*, and faith in the Redeemer's *dignity as a person properly divine*. My heart's

esire is, that all the saints may be brought to
 joyce in Jesus, as the mighty God, the *Alpha* and
Omega, the first and the last, which is, and which
 as, and which is to come, the *Almighty*, Rev. i. 8.

DIFFICULTIES CONCERNING THE LOVE OF GOD.

Secondly, That Jehovah changeth not, is a
 self-evident truth, a scripture axiom. "With him
 'there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning.'
 Being perfection itself, therefore the properties of
 his nature, and purposes of his will, are absolutely
 unalterable. What he has determined, shall be
 done. "He is of one mind, and who can turn
 'him? For the council of the Lord standeth for
 "ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations,
 "and to Zion he says, he will rest in his love.
 "He will rejoice over her with singing, for having
 'loved his own which were in the world, he loved
 "them unto the end." Notwithstanding the above
 and such like solemn declarations made by the God
 of truth, such objections have been raised against
 the unchangeableness of Jehovah's love as greatly
 to perplex and stumble some who are evidently the
 distinguished objects of it.

As wrong conclusions may be drawn from
 principles which are unexceptionably right, so I
 apprehend many of those things are indisputa-

ble facts from whence the changeable nature of God's love is inferred; and indeed it seems his people are more agreed in their primary principles, than in their conclusions. In the former there may be an happy union, though in the latter they widely differ, and cast stumbling-blocks in each other's way. For the exemplification and removal of which, as relating to the doctrine of divine love, it may be proper to observe, that creatures who are now the objects of God's indignation, were once loved by him, those infernal spirits who kept not their first estate, though now the abhorred of the Lord, were, while innocent, the objects of his approbation; and the same may be said of man, considered as in his present state of corruption, and his original state of perfection as created of God; John i. 1, 14; Phil. ii. 6, 7.

It is evident, God could not produce creatures morally defective or disagreeable to himself; they were what he willed them to be, i. e. *good*, yea *very good*, and as such were loved and delighted in by their Maker. Every creature being Jehovah's production, therefore no creature was in its original state the object of his disapprobation, and yet many of them are now the declared objects of his *hatred* and *indignation*. From the *above self-evident* facts it is inferred by some *sincere inquirers* after truth, that the love of God

changeable, and not invariably fixed on its objects, which inference has perplexed many of the people of God, and proved a stumbling-block in their way to a proper acquaintance with several very important truths in divine revelation. From this source various errors have proceeded, which the glorious gospel of the grace of God has been beclouded, the faith of many Christians weakened, and their joy in Jesus and hope of glory greatly diminished. But that the above visible inference is a false conclusion, (though drawn from undeniable facts) will I hope be made fully appear, if we impartially survey the doctrine of Jehovah's love, in the light of divine revelation.

The love of God, according to the scriptures, ought to be considered as *natural* and *sovereign*. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and holiness is his perpetual delight. This love issueth from the perfection and purity of his nature, and has for its object his own holy image, instamped upon his rational creatures; or in other words, in holy dispositions and corresponding acts, the Lord taketh pleasure and delight. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity with approbation, or look on holiness with disgust. His hatred of sin and love of purity are not acts of divine sovereignty. Sin is not hateful because God willed it should be so, but is odious

in its own nature to every pure being ; and is therefore infinitely hateful to an *infinitely holy God*.

God does not hate sin, because he has by his law forbid it, but has forbid it, because it is what he *loaths* as contrary to his holy *nature*. Perfect conformity to God, and supreme delight in him as the chief good, are enforced by God's holy law, because of their native excellency and propriety. Holiness then being the object of God's *natural* love, or essential approbation, and sin the reverse ; it necessarily follows that every unholy creature is odious in the sight of God, therefore a creature having lost its purity, ceases to be the object of his natural approbation ; yet the alteration is not in God, but in the creature, which is become through moral impurity what he abhors. God's natural love is still unalterably fixed on personal purity, wherever it is found ; but in reference to a polluted creature, love has lost its object, that on which it was fixed being quite annihilated or destroyed.

Thus it appears, that the various ranks of intelligent creatures were in their original condition interested in God's favour. Even those abominable beings, called devils, were, while holy, the objects of their Maker's love and approbation, as well as the angels who continue to shine in *holy splendour* and untainted purity. Though

a part of the angelic world, and the whole human race, have by their revolt from God become vile, and cease to be the objects of the Lord's delight, yet there is no variableness or change in Jehovah. But to every proper object God is love; 1 John iv. 16: for God has no aversion to his creatures simply considered as creatures, but on account of their moral depravity; nor does he necessarily love them because they owe their existence to his sovereign will and almighty power, but as the subjects of his moral image, which consisteth in righteousness and true holiness. As all mankind have lost the image of God in which they were created, and become base and abominable in his sight, being *filthy* and *guilty* before him, they must have continued in a condition eternally disgusting to God, and in a state tremendously terrible to themselves, had not the Lord been pleased to have shown them kindness in a sovereign way, being graciously determined to save whom he thought proper with an everlasting salvation. That love from which salvation springs is properly sovereign, and absolutely free. None are its objects because they deserved to be so, nor was God under any necessity of nature so to distinguish them, but it consisted in a voluntary determination to do good to the persons he sovereignly *fixed upon* as his people, with infinite and *invariable delight*.

If we then consider the *voluntary* love of the great eternal as distinct from, and yet harmonizing with, that of which we have been treating, difficulties which otherwise are insurmountable will disappear. That love which is *essential* or natural to God, has personal holiness or pure principles for its invariable object. But *sovereign* love fixed upon *persons*, without a regard had to their *dispositions* as its cause, which sovereign favour is intirely uninfluenced by their dispositions, and is beautifully illustrated by the Lord's voluntary favour to the person of Jacob, and the distinguished special privileges enjoyed by his posterity, without respect had to his having done either good or evil. Jacob have I loved, saith the Lord; Rom. ix. 13 *. And Moses, speaking of Israel as a chosen people, observes, The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you because ye were more in number than any people, (for ye were the fewest of all people) but because the Lord loved you; Deut. vii. 7, 8. Such as it hath pleased the Lord to

* The hatred of Esau, as opposed to the love of the Lord to Jacob, is not to be considered as implying any positive indignation to his person as a sinner; because the love and the hatred spoken of was without their having done either *good or evil*; it only intends his not being loved as Jacob was. In this sense, hatred is to be understood in Deut. xxi. 15; Luke xiv. 26; and John xii. 25.

make his people, 1 Sam. xii. 22, may with humble joy, and holy admiration say, Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; 1 John iii. 1. This sovereign love of the Lord to his spiritual Israel, set apart his own son Immanuel as the head of his people, and gave their persons to him before the world was, and in time gave him to die for them. God sovereignly loving their persons, but abhorring their sinful conduct and criminal dispositions, was determined to remove that from them which he hated in them, and by creating them anew in Christ Jesus, or implanting holy and heavenly principles in their souls to make them a holy people, that as such they might become the suitable, fit, and proper objects of his natural, necessary, and essential love; which as aforesaid has holiness for its invariable object. Sovereign love having their persons only for its objects, without being excited by their dispositions, is therefore invariably the same without addition or diminution. Hence all that is done for them, and wrought in them, is in consequence of, and according to that great love wherewith he loved them, even when they were dead in trespasses and sins. This sovereign love is the fruit of God's good pleasure, or the effect of gracious good-will to them. *The utility and propriety of the above distin-*

tion, were it sufficiently attended to, would appear as bright as the sun in a clear meridian. I wish some able pen would undertake more fully to investigate the subject than either my talents or time will admit of. However, the few following remarks I hope may be of use to weak Christians, for whose sake I write, either to rectify their judgments,—stimulate their obedience,—increase their joy,—or mitigate their perplexity.

1. From the sacred oracles it appears, that God's necessary hatred to sin is not contrary to his sovereign love, or gracious intentions to do good to his people, even while they are subjects of no other dispositions than what he abhors. If sovereign love to the sinner was inconsistent with his infinite hatred to sin, who then could be saved? For fallen men are, as such, become altogether abominable in the eyes of their holy Maker, the imagination of their hearts being while unrenewed, evil, only evil, and that continually. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good, no not one; Psal. xiv. 1, 3; compared with Rom. iii. 9, 18. "We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful *and hating one another.*" Tit. iii. 3. *They who do such things are worthy of death, and*

likewise those who take pleasure in them that do them ; Rom. i. 32. So-then they that are in the flesh cannot please God ; Rom. viii. 8. Nevertheless, God commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us ; Rom. v. 8. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins ; 1 John iv. 10. In this was the love of God manifested. Ver. 9. Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love ; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee ; Jer. xxxi. 3. Jesus, when pleading with his Father on behalf of his chosen, says, 'Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me, and thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world ; John xvii. 23, 24. We all had our conversation in times past in the lust of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even *when* we were dead in sins, hath quickened us, &c. Eph. ii. 3, 4, 5. Respecting their persons they were loved while in their sins, but not loved in reference to their dispositions. No, God necessarily hated, while he sovereignly loved. But after that, the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared *toward man ; not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he*

saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Tit. iii. 5. Being thus the workmanship of God created anew in Christ, the church becomes the object of the Lord's necessary love, or natural delight. As he saith, I will call her beloved which was not beloved; Rom. ix. 25.

2. Those who are renewed in the spirit of their minds, and possessed of holy principles, and are undeniably as such the objects of God's natural love; yet through sin become the objects of his holy displeasure. Nevertheless, that does not suppose or imply any change in Jehovah. Not in his sovereign good-will to their persons, which is still the same, being the effect of his mere good pleasure, and not fixed on them because of any good moral quality in them. Nor is there any change in his natural love, because only holiness is its invariable object. Agreeably to, and in proof of the above, we read that though God *loved*, yet he greatly *abhorred* Israel, and was wroth with his inheritance; Ps. lxxviii. 59, 62. Being defiled with their own works, therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance; Psalm cvi. 4. Nevertheless, he *regarded* them when he heard their cry, ver. 44. *Yea, mine heritage*, saith the Lord, *is unto me as a lion in the forest*, it crieth out against me,

therefore I *hate* it. I *hate* the *dearly beloved* of my soul; Jer. xii. 7, 8. 'Thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities; yet sovereign grace breaks forth in Israel's favour, and Jehovah adds, I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins; Isaiah xliii. 24, 25. I knew thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb. Yet, saith the Lord, for my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee that I cut thee not off; Isaiah xlviii. 9. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth and smote him, I hid me and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. And was not the desperate sinner made a dreadful example of divine displeasure? He must have been so, had not free exuberant grace interposed in his favour, saying, I have seen his ways, and I will heal him; Isaiah lvii. 17, 18. Sovereign love triumphs in the sinner's salvation, through the merits of the almighty Saviour, in a way which displays the infinite purity of Jehovah's nature and unmerited favour. Sin gives many a mortal wound, but grace provides a cure.

Thus, from the example of God's conduct towards backsliding saints, we have striking proofs that neither God's natural nor sovereign love *change their objects*. Holiness is the invariable

object of the former, and the persons of his people, the objects of the latter. I might add, All the good which sovereign grace does work, or implant in the human heart, meets with God's necessary approbation in all its genuine operations. He attends to the language of penitence with pleasure. He says of mourning Ephraim, whom he heard bemoaning himself, My bowels are troubled for him, and I earnestly remember him still. With what melting pity does he address the soul that seeks for solitude to lament its doleful condition? O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rocks, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely; Song ii. 14. Sovereign love having given sight to the soul which was before blind to the beauties of Immanuel, to Jesus it now looks and loves, and he being delighted with the exercise of grace, says, Thou hast ravished my heart, thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes; how fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! How much better is thy love than wine; and the smell of thine ointments than all spices! Song iv. 10. The productions of sovereign grace God naturally loves, and therefore takes pleasure in them that fear him, in them who hope in his mercy; Psalm cxlvii. 11. Once more:

3. Of that love which is essential to the na-

ture of God, good men are not equally the objects ; for as no man is its object but in consequence of being the subject of holiness, therefore a growth in grace, or in holy obedience, will ever meet with God's increasing approbation. Christ, as man, though ever pure, increased in favour with God ; Luke ii. 52. Therefore doth my Father love me (said Jesus) because I lay down my life ; John x. 17. He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him. If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him ; John xiv. 21, 23. For the Father himself loveth you, *because* ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God ; John xvi. 27. Keep yourselves in the love of God ; Jude, 21st verse. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you ; continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love ; John xv. 9, 10. Though all regenerate persons are evidently the equal objects of special sovereign favour, and with them, as in Christ, the Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake ; Isaiah xlii. 21, and their persons are accepted in the beloved. Yet with many of them the Lord *is not* well pleased, with respect *to the temper of their hearts, and manner of life*

See 1 Cor. x. 4, 5. Therefore only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ. We beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus Christ, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk, and to *please* God, so ye would abound more and more; Phil. 1. 27. 1 Thess. iv. 1. Knowing that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord; 1 Cor. xv. 58. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love; Heb. vi. 10. From the above we may infer.

1. That the everlasting damnation of those who kept not their first estate in which they enjoyed the divine approbation, does not oppose the unchangeable nature of Jehovah's love, nor render the eternal salvation of his people precarious or uncertain.

2. How carefully should every saint watch against every sin, and strive to grow in perfect conformity to his God. True happiness will ever be found inseparably connected with real holiness, and sin, wherever it is, will invariably remain the object of God's displeasure. On the account of which he hides his face, and is wroth with his people, and though he pardon them, yet he will take vengeance on their inventions, for whom he loveth he chasteneth.

3. *How awfully miserable must our condition have been, having lost that rectitude of nature in*

which God delighted, had he not proceeded towards us in a way of sovereign grace. Choosing us in, and committing our persons to, the care of his own son, laying our iniquities upon him and punishing him for them, and justifying us on his account. Conveying holiness, pardon, and peace, through him to make us pure and spotless before his throne. There, in that world of bliss, God in all his essential glories will be for ever enjoyed the same as though sin had never been. With additional pleasures arising from the amazing infinite source of sovereign spontaneous favour. The hearts of the redeemed will be ravished, their powers of mind animated, and their elevated songs make heaven's high arches wring with the joyful acclamation of, *Salvation to our God and the Lamb*. A full evidence of the infinite deserts of sin, which seems to be intended by the smoke of the furnace ascending before the throne, will heighten their admiration of sovereign love, and fill their capacious souls with unspeakable joy, profound reverence, and holy wonder.

4. Opposition to the sovereign grace of God is truly lamentable. How mournful to think that poor condemned criminals should be filled with enmity against that, in consequence of which salvation can only become the object of hope. *It is a striking proof of the deceitful and infa-*

tuating nature of sin, and the pride of the human heart. But some upright minds, being subject to discouragements through misapprehensions which are often the fruit of misrepresentations of truth, I shall therefore attend to another subject nearly connected with the above, at the very name of which some professors are startled, though it is frequently met with in the scriptures of truth. Which is,

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

1. Election or choice always implies freedom of will in the person or persons who choose or elect. Constraint or compulsion is incompatible with, and opposite to choice, which must be voluntary or not at all.

2. Every elector has an end in view, in respect of which he makes his choice, or for the accomplishment of which the choice is made.

3. The person chosen is always considered as passive, being entirely at the will of the elector, so far as relates to the act of choosing.

These three ideas are inseparably connected with election, or a proper choice, whatever kind of election we refer to, whether made by God or man. But some young or weak Christians have confused or discouraging ideas of the doctrine *now under consideration*, for want of attending *to the different senses* in which the scriptures

speak of persons being the chosen, or the elect of God. Of which ignorance or inattention the opposers of sovereign grace take the advantage; and in order to perplex or prejudice their minds, produce scripture instances of some who were *elected*, and nevertheless perished in their sins, as there is reason to think Saul and Judas did, and yet both of them were chosen of God. Hence it is inferred that as some are lost who were elected, therefore election does not secure the salvation of those who are chosen, but is of such a nature as to leave their future happiness and final felicity, entirely precarious. As such inferences as the above, at the first view, wear the appearance of truth, it is no wonder that some gracious persons are indifferent about the doctrine. But the apostle exhorts Christians to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure, by being able to produce such evidences as may demonstrate their personal interest in Jehovah's choice: the knowledge of which in the judgment of Jesus is calculated to produce in his people greater pleasure than they ought to take from the evidence of devils being in subjection to them. To have hell vanquished must afford unutterable joy to those who wrestle with the powers of darkness; notwithstanding in this rejoice *not*, that the spirits are subject unto you (*saieth the Lord*) but rather rejoice because y^e

names are written in heaven ; Luke x. 20. For the relief of serious inquirers after truth, it may be proper to observe, that by election in scripture is sometimes intended God's setting apart or choosing a people, to the enjoyment of peculiar external privileges ; in that sense he chose the Jewish nation, and therefore they as a nation, notwithstanding their wickedness, are frequently called the Lord's elect, or chosen people. Again, the Lord hath elected or chosen particular persons to act in office capacity ; as Samuel, Saul, David, and many more under the Old Testament ; and Peter, James, Judas, and others, were chosen or elected in like manner under the New. Hence Jesus said to his disciples, have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil.

But the election of grace, of which I am treating, is of a different nature, and consists in God's choosing of persons in Christ Jesus, or setting them apart as in connection with him, to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth. Salvation was the end God had in view ; to bring his chosen to the possession and enjoyment of. *Salvation*, not only as consisting in a deliverance from punishment, but from all iniquity. Therefore in the definition the apostle gives of the doctrine ; sanctification by *the spirit*, and a true faith, were what they were *chosen to be the subjects of*, through which sal-

vation only could be enjoyed. This choice was from the beginning or ever the earth was. They were not chosen, because they were viewed as holy, and therefore deserving to be distinguished as God's favourites, on account of their obedience or personal purity, but that they *should* be holy. The great apostle in his deep but delightful epistle to the 'saints at Ephesus, treats of the important subject in so full, plain, and accurate a manner, as to answer almost every pertinent query that can be made respecting the doctrine. He begins with expressions of fervent affection and humble gratitude to its infinite Author, saying, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Q. 1. What hath he done?

A. Who hath blessed us.

Q. 2. With what hath he blessed us?

A. With all spiritual blessings.

Q. 3. Where are those blessings deposited?

A. In Christ.

Q. 4. Where may seeking souls expect to find and enjoy them?

A. In heavenly places (or things).

Q. 5. According to what does he proceed in the bestowment of such special privileges; is it owing to our choice of him?

A. *No, But according as he hath chosen us in him.*

Q. 6. When ?

A. Before the foundation of the world.

Q. 7. But did he not choose us because we were holy, or because he foresaw we would be so ?

A. No, but that we *should* be holy.

Q. 8. Did he then intend that all such should be made completely holy ?

A. Yes, and without blame before him in love.

Q. 9. And is every thing aforesaid absolutely secured ?

A. Yes, having predestinated us.

Q. 10. Predestinated to what ?

A. Unto the adoption of children.

Q. 11. By, and to whom ?

A. By Jesus Christ, to himself.

Q. 12. What is the source of such favours, or from whence do they flow ?

A. The good pleasure of his will.

Q. 13. In what does the whole terminate, or to what does it lead ?

A. To the praise of the glory of his grace.

Wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the *riches* of his grace. See Eph. i. 4th to the 12th. *Again, the same inspired writer asserts, such were chosen to salvation, through sanctification of the*

spirit and belief of the truth ; 2 Thess. ii. 13. God kindly connected their final felicity and his own glory, when he ordained them to eternal life. Acts xiii. 48. But though Judas was chosen to office, he was not chosen to holiness, for Jesus, when speaking to the disciples as his servants and true followers (Judas being present), he said, I speak not of you all, I know whom I have chosen. John xiii. 18. The names of his chosen are written in heaven, and all such are freed from condemnation. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? Rom. viii. 33. All which could not be said of the Jewish nation, nor of Judas, and many more who have been chosen to office capacity ; besides, individuals are called the elect, who could not bear rule in the church of God, for a woman was not suffered to speak in the church, nor to usurp authority over the man, but was to be in silence. 1 Tim. ii. 12. Yet we read of an elect lady and her elect sister. 2 John i. 13. If God hath thus chosen, the end he had in view will certainly be accomplished, for saith Jesus, all that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me I will no wise cast out. His people shall be willing in the day of his power, for having loved them with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness will he draw them. No one instance can be given of God having chosen any people, person, or

place, to that which was not actually accomplished. Did the Lord choose the Jewish nation to peculiar privileges? Yes, and in consequence of that choice they had the advantage of all other nations, and much every way. *Samuel* did actually prophesy, and *Saul* and *David* were really kings in Israel. *Judas* was actually numbered with the apostles, and with them took part of the *ministry* to which he was *elected*. *Moses* was Israel's leader, and law-giver, because he was chosen by the Lord to such dignity. *Aaron* and his *descendants* were priests of the most high God, because they were *elected* by him to that office. So the Lord chose *Jerusalem* as the residence of the *ark*, and the place where *sacrifices* should be offered, and thither the tribes of Israel actually repaired to worship, and adore him, whose *dwelling was in Zion*. In no one instance did Jehovah choose in vain. The ends he had in view were ever accomplished. And if so, can there be any reason assigned why those, and those only who were *chosen* to the *greatest* blessings, should fall short of them? But the foundation standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his. In every age as many as were ordained to eternal life believed, *the election obtained it*, but the rest were *blind-ed, by the God of this world who blindeth the ves of them who believe not*. So then, at this

present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace, and if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. Rom. xi. 5, 6.

Another stumbling-block in the way of many inquirers after the doctrine of election, is *Reprobation*, which is generally considered as the counterpart of election, and related to it as its direct opposite; the same as a negative is related to a positive idea. But if it be understood as the negative of election, is it not strange it should change its nature, and in controversy become a positive idea? And yet as such it has been opposed and defended with great warmth; for the adversaries of sovereign grace, scarce ever directly encounter the doctrine of election; but artfully file off to reprobation, as if they were conscious election was in itself invulnerable, and could not possibly be reduced. But from the mountain of reprobation they attack the doctrine intended to be demolished, and charge it with the most horrid consequences, too shocking to relate, which the defenders of sovereign grace have repeatedly proved to be quite foreign to, and not in the least inferable from the doctrine of God's sovereign choice of his people to grace and glory. But perhaps their defence of the doctrine of reprobation has not been equally successful. But the admitting of it as the oppo-

site of election, has been stumbling to many enquirers after truth, and encouraging to its opposers. Election or choice indeed implies a negative, or that some are not chosen; which the scripture calls the *rest*; this is readily allowed, but reprobation as mentioned in scripture is never opposed to election. To the doctrine of election it does not seem related, but stands in a quite different situation in the system of scriptural divinity.

1. If reprobation conveyed the idea of non-election, by a person being reprobated, we should understand one not elected; but how will such an idea comport with the apostle's reasoning, when he says, Know ye not that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates? 2 Cor. ~~xx~~ 15. To suppose him to mean they were not elected if Christ was not in them, is supposing him to contradict his own experience, and oppose self-evident facts; for there was a time when Christ was not in Paul himself; during which period he was exceeding mad against those who professed the name of Jesus. But, says he, it pleased God to reveal his Son in me. *Before* this happy change took place he was in a state of *reprobation*, for Christ was not in him, and yet he was never in a *state of non-election*, but was one chosen in Christ *before the world was*. Again he could not mean *if Christ was not in them* they were not elected,

because Christ is not naturally in his elect, as most of them know, and lament when called by grace, that they lived without God, and without Christ in the world ; therefore during that period, they were *reprobates*, not having Christ in them ; nevertheless they were the elect of God, of which their being called by grace is a proof. From hence it appears that reprobation is not the opposite of election.

2. That reprobation is not the opposite of election will appear evident, if it be considered that election is an act of divine sovereignty, arising merely from the will of God, without any fitness in creatures deserving to be so distinguished ; but reprobation, whenever the word is used in scripture, respects a comparative deficiency, or an essential defect in those who are reprobated. Election is the effect of, or entirely flows from, the good pleasure of God's will in favour of the *persons* of his people, but reprobation originates not *merely* from God's will, but the natural contrariety there is between Jehovah's *purity*, and their *pollution*.

3. *Reprobation* in scripture always stands opposed to, and is the natural negative of *approbation*, whether it respect the *state* of a person, the *frame* of his mind, or the *nature* of his actions. Hence vile professors are compared to the alloy or dross frequently mixed with metal, which on

trial is found base or deficient in quality, therefore reprobate silver shall men call them, because God has rejected them. Jer. vi. 30. So in the text before mentioned, Know ye not that Christ is in you except ye be reprobates? the apostle's obvious meaning is that such are *destitute of real worth*. For however splendid a profession be, yet without Christ, all will be found mere *refuse* at last; therefore he puts them upon close examination, lest they should be deceived by appearances, *Thinking themselves something, while in fact they are nothing*. Hence in the next verse he adds, But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates, 2 Cor. xiii. 5, 6, and in verse 7, he says, Now I pray to God that ye do no evil, not that we should appear *approved*, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as *reprobates*. Thus he considers *reprobation* and *approbation* as natural opposites. Again, men of *corrupt* minds are said to be *reprobates* concerning the faith, i. e. destitute of a true understanding of the truth. 2 Tim. iii. 8. And the abominable and disobedient are unto every good work *reprobate*. Tit. i. 16. Agreeable therefore to this view of reprobation, those vile affections to which the Gentiles were given up, are called *A reprobate mind*. Rom. i. 26, 28, 29. Meaning *that their dispositions and conduct were odious, and could not possibly be approved of, either by*

God, or good men. From the above considerations it evidently appears that election, and reprobation, are not inseparably connected nor even so much as related as *kindred* ideas, and that reprobation does not intend an absolute appointment to eternal misery, for such may still find mercy as Paul did ; but that it is the awful opposite to divine approbation, whether it respect *persons, principles, or proceedings*. But some may reply, Though the term *reprobation* should be disused as relating to election, yet if the ideas be retained which were conveyed by it, the doctrine is not less exceptionable than before. True ; therefore let us calmly consider whether those *horrid* ideas, which the opposers of election have always connected with the term reprobation, are or are not as foreign to the doctrine of election as the term itself. The most decent and sober opposers of the doctrine in question, generally charge it with implying three things. 1. An appointment to inevitable destruction of those who are not elected, therefore, 2. that the doctrine of election is injurious to those not included in it, and consequently, 3. is a reflection on the justice or moral character of God. These reasons, it is confessed, are quite sufficient to justify a dissent from the doctrine, or an opposition to it *supposing* them well founded. But whether *these awful inferences* are the genuine offspring

of election or not, will appear, if brought under impartial examination. Respecting the first objection, the question is, 1. Whether the doctrine of election (supposing it a fact) be the cause of, or in the least influential upon an appointment of any creature to destruction? That it was neither the *cause* nor the *occasion* of such an appointment is demonstrably evident from its very nature. It could not have such a tendency because election is an act absolutely sovereign, or a gracious act arising simply from Jehovah's will. But punishment does not arise from divine sovereignty. If it did, it would be *causeless*; but God never punished (therefore never intended to do so) without a criminal cause in the creature. God does not punish for sin because it was his *sovereign* will, but his very will to punish ariseth from the *holiness* of his *nature*, and the *equity* of his *government*; therefore God's intention to punish ariseth from a *distinct* source, from that *out* of which election springs. They are in their nature eternally distinct, as any acts of God can possibly be. Such a charge therefore might as well be brought against *creation* as *election*. It seems very strange that any serious person should oppose the idea of God's *decreeing* to punish for sin, seeing he actually does so, which he could not, if it was an *unrighteous* thing in God to take vengeance. If it *be right for the Lord* to punish those who are

punished by him, it could not be wrong to *resolve* to do so, unless it be *wrong* to *determine* to do what is *right*. However such a decree does not arise from election. What is opposite to election, is a mere negation, or a leaving others in that state in which all men were viewed by the great Eternal when he chose his people ; therefore the doctrine is not, 2. injurious to those not included in it ; for, if election respected its objects as *sinless*, or simply considered as creatures formed of God, which some think, seeing the happy angels, and the person of Christ were included in Jehovah's choice, those *from* among whom they were chosen, could not be deemed *punishable*, being considered in their *pure* unfallen state ; therefore election, if so considered, could not in the nature of things be the *cause* or *occasion* of God's designing to punish any man. If the election of men be considered as a choice of *criminal* creatures, or of creatures considered as in a *sinful* fallen state, in which light it is viewed by many, because the choice is *unto salvation through sanctification of the spirit*. However, the different stating of the doctrine is only a circumstance which does not alter the *nature* of the truth stated, for if it be thus considered, it unavoidably follows, that as those *not* included in the sovereign choice, were viewed by God as *sinful* when the choice was made ; therefore the choice could not

possibly *make* them sinful, nor *cause* them to be viewed as criminals. It is singularly absurd to suppose the prescience of God, or his all-comprehending understanding, to be the fruit of his sovereign will, and yet this absurdity, gross as it is, attends the objection, which is the same as saying, If God had not elected some, he would never have known, nor thought of the condition of others. As no injury is done to any man by the doctrine in question: therefore, 3. it is not contrary to, or an impeachment of, the moral character of God. In election there is no connivance at sin implied. By it, sin in the chosen, was not rendered *less* odious, nor justice *partially* administered in their favour, but a surety was graciously substituted in their stead, who bore their sins, and was wounded for their transgressions, and by whose obedience the law of God was magnified, and through his death impartial justice shone with tremendous lustre. Had the crimes of which the elect were guilty been *transferred* or *imputed* to those who perish, in that case an *exemption* of the elect from punishment would have been *unjust* and *injurious*, because *mercy* shewn to *them* would have heightened the *misery* of *others*. But as every one who perish suffers *only* according to the demerit of his own personal *sins*, therefore to infer that the doctrine of election *is detrimental* to man, and *unworthy* of God, dis-

covers either *pitiable* weakness, or *powerful* prejudice, for such inferences seem as opposite to truth, decency, and common sense, as a man would appear to be, *if* he undertook to prove that God is *cruel* because he is *kind*, and that those have great cause to *complain* who were never *injured*. That the doctrine is not inimicable to christian experience, *CA* but of a contrary tendency, will be shown in its proper place. What has been said I hope may tend to remove the objections against it as a revealed truth of great importance, in consequence of which, Christ and his people were so *connected*, that what he did was *imputable* to them.—But though the scriptures speak remarkably plain of the near relation subsisting between Christ and his church in *consequence* of electing love, yet various stumbling-blocks are frequently met with in the way of clear views of, and faith in that doctrine; for the removal of which, if God please to bless the attempt, let us briefly consider, Fourthly,

UNION TO CHRIST.

Various warm disputes have been among the people of God about union to Christ, particularly as relating to its commencement, which is thought by some to have been from everlasting; and by *others not till or after believing*. Though agreed *in the main* about its nature and duration, each

side have been pretty free, and fertile in the invention of consequences, as arising from their opponents sentiments, which perhaps are equally abhorrent to both; by reason of which, many sincere inquirers after truth have been greatly discouraged, wounded in their minds, and prevented making progress in religious attainments. Some are likewise perplexed and stumbled by a *third* party, who differing from the other about the *nature* of the union, therefore deny its *durability*, and maintain that those who are in *Christ to-day*, may possibly be in *hell to-morrow*. Perhaps the doctrine of union with Christ may be of such a *copious* and *complex* nature, as to justify in some measure the sentiment of *each*, who viewing the subject in *detached* parts only, therefore may conclude some things are *opposites* which are in fact only *distinct*. However, so far as that may be the case with common christians, an impartial survey, or review of the subject, may have a reconciling tendency, for which purpose it should be considered, that union to Christ is of a threefold nature, which may (for the sake of keeping ideas distinct) be denominated, *visible*, *vital*, and *virtual*.

First, By *visible*, is intended a credible profession of Christ, joined with an apparent subjection *to him*, or an embracing his gospel, and obeying *his laws*. Where there appears love to Jesus, and subjection to him as a Saviour, and a Sovereign.

reign, we are *bound* to consider such persons as related to him, and to love them accordingly. The apostle treating of the visible church as in union with Christ founded on profession, says, We being many are one body *in* Christ, and every one members one of another; Rom. xii. 5; and speaking of the churches of Judea, he adds, which were *in* Christ; Gal. i. 22. To be therefore *in* the *church* by a credible profession, was called a being *in* *Christ*, as in 1 Cor. xii. 12. See Gal. iii. 27; 1 Cor. xii. 13. Yet it is evident the apostle did not account all were true believers which were in Christ by profession, though he was bound in charity to hope thus of them all, till there was evidence to the contrary. The inspired penmen did not certainly know the gracious state of the persons they addressed, but had cheering hopes, and distressing fears, respecting those to whom they ministered. See Epist. to Gal. Even Jesus, who *knew* what was in man, generally, as a minister, addressed his own people by such terms as were descriptive of gracious dispositions; Matt. v.

As many are in Christ only by a profession having a name to live, and are dead, therefore there is a striking propriety in the various *ifs* we meet with in scripture, when promises and encouragements are treated of, which *ifs* do not imply an *uncertainty* of a true believer's future happiness, *but an uncertainty* respecting who the persons are

that have believed through grace. With what jealousy does Paul speak of the Galatian churches, and of many in that of Corinth, and with what caution does Peter mention one whom he greatly valued, Sylvanus, a faithful brother, as I suppose ; 2 Pet. v. 12. The visible kingdom of Christ is compared to a net which incloseth divers kinds : but the Lord who searcheth the heart, will take care of the good, and cast the bad away. Then many who were visibly in connection with Christ, who eat and drank in his presence, who were the children of the kingdom, and visible members of his body the church, will be cast out ; so that those who are found fruitless branches in Christ, will be broken off and burned with unquenchable fire. Therefore it is granted that many who are in Christ, in the sense before mentioned, may notwithstanding lift up their eyes in hell being in torment.

Secondly, There is a *vital* union, or a divine connection between Christ and his people, which takes place at regeneration, when the soul is made to hear the voice of the Son of God and live, for the Son quickeneth whom he will. Hence the apostle says, I live, yet not I, but Christ ~~which~~ liveth in me. To *live* implies three things, all *which* in a spiritual sense every true Christian is *the subject of* ; in consequence of Christ being *their life*, he is that to his church which a soul is

unto a body, with which it is vitally connected. From living union with him ariseth spiritual SENSATION, ANIMATION, PRESERVATION. They *feel* the burden of guilt, and are *sensible* of the plague of their own hearts. They are convinced of their wants and weakness, and are conscious of being in a condition both mean and miserable. They see their own deformity and Jehovah's beauty. Their ears are open to receive instruction; and the voice of God in his word, whether *terrific* or *tender*, makes *deep* and *durable* impressions on their minds. They have a taste for the things of religion, after which they hunger and thirst. To them Christ is precious: his name is an ointment poured forth, his beauty is as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon; yea he is altogether lovely. *All* their *spiritual* sensations, whether painful or pleasurable, are in consequence of *living* union with Jesus; for prior to its commencement they were dead in sin, and destitute of every holy emotion and perception. Christian *activity* is entirely owing to Christ's animative influence. Through his spirit and all-sufficient grace, they *serve* with pleasure, or *suffer* with patience; they strive and war against sin, and wrestle with principalities, and powers, over all which they are more than conquerors through him *who hath* loved them. Yea, they can do *all things* through Christ strengthening them, and

without him they can do nothing. The principle of *animation* ever discovers an inclination to *preserve* its connection with that which is animated by it; this is obvious in not only rational life, but even in animal likewise. So, Christ has always discovered an entire, infinite inclination to keep and preserve his people in connection with himself. He influences them to love, and labour for the meat which perisheth not. He alarms their fears that they may *escape* danger, and strengthens their faith that they may *lay hold* of eternal life, *secures* their love by fresh discoveries of divine *beauties*, and the suitableness of celestial objects, to *heaven-born* souls. Thus he *draws* them in the paths of duty by the bands of love, and by the cords of a man. He is the *author* of their *preservation* in such a way, as to prevent presumption, and secure their attention to appointed means, which divine wisdom has connected with the desired end. He says he will never leave them, but will be with them always to the end of the world; and writes his law in their hearts, that they might not finally depart from him. He saves them therefore, not *contrary* to their *inclination*, but with their *free* consent, and *fervent* desire. He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit; *1 Cor. vi. 17.* Between Jesus and them, there is a *oneness in perception, affection, interest, and end.* As they are precious to him, so he is precious to

them : the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. His interest is theirs, and theirs is his. He rejoiceth in the prosperity of his people, and they esteem Jerusalem, i. e. his cause on earth, above their chief joy ; his revealed *designs* correspond with their real *desires*. The *destruction* of sin, and the *perfection* of purity they long for. He gave his life for them, neither do they count theirs too dear to sacrifice on his behalf ; their life therefore is in their hand ready to be delivered up at their Saviour's call. They rejoice in Jesus on account of his mediatorial obedience, not only as it is their security from condemnation, but as it does infinite honour to heaven's righteous law. What Christ has done intentionally centres, and will ultimately terminate, in the vindication of God's moral government, and the eternal display of Jehovah's essential perfections, in all their native beauty, and infinite excellency, grandeur, and glory, that God, to whom sinners have an aversion, *may appear* and be *acknowledged*, not only by angels but by men, as *all in all*. As influenced by grace, the true believer says, Oh, how I love thy law ! I delight in the law of God after the inward man. Jehovah he *admires* and *adores*, and when he takes a solemn view of the great Eternal, whose glory dazzles angelic eyes, he is astonished, *foundered*, and *lost*, in *pleasing wonder*. He

sinks into profound contempt of himself, and feels keen reflections on his criminal want of affection to, and departures from a being so infinitely deserving the supreme love of men and angels. But on the revival of hope, with humble reverence, and holy rapture he sings, "*The Lord is my portion, saith my soul. He is my rock and fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my strength, my buckler, my salvation, and my high tower.*" In his presence is fulness of joy, at his right hand are pleasures for evermore. Then shall "I be satisfied, when I awake in his likeness." Though conscious of meanness and demerit, his language now is, Will he plead against me with his great power? No, but he will put strength into me. I know whom I have believed. He hath said my grace shall be sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness. The Lord will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

As such souls freely give themselves unto the Lord, so he receives them graciously and rejoiceth in them as his *spouse, his property, and portion*; it is his will, and their desire to be like him, and with him for ever, and for them to die is gain. Therefore though shoals of professors perish, *none who are possessors of his grace ever shall. Their internal life is eternal* in its duration; for

thus saith the Lord, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand;" John x. 28. "He that believeth on him is not condemned;" John iii. 18. There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit; Rom. viii. 1. As there is no condemnation to such *now*, there never shall be any. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth, shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life; John v. 24. Whoso believeth on him shall not perish, but have eternal life; John iii. 15, 16. They shall never die, though they were dead, yet shall they live; John xi. 25. Who shall separate them from the love of Christ? Rom. viii. 35. Whose spirit is in them as a well of water springing up into everlasting life; John iv. 14. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life, but are dead while they live." Those therefore who are *vitally* united to Christ cannot *lose* their spiritual life while he *maintains* his own; for he hath said, Because I live ye shall live also. Being *bought* by his precious blood, and *kept* by almighty power, they therefore may conclude with the apostle, "That, when Christ who is their life, shall

“ appear, they shall also appear with him in
“ glory.”

There is therefore no real contradiction in the declarations in scripture, though they may to some appear opposite, respecting the *final* state of those who are united to Christ; for salvation is not *inseparably* connected with a *visible*, but with a *vital* union to the Son of God. Those who perish never were spiritually in Christ: he was never the home of their hearts. They never *approved* of him, nor he of them; therefore he will say to all that shall be doomed to destruction, I never knew you. Though they may have been *among* the saints, yet such were never *of* them; but of a contrary character all the while. Hence of apostates, the apostle thus speaks: They went out from us, but they were not of us, for *if* they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us, but they went out that they might be made manifest, that they were not all of us, but ye have an unction from the *holy one*, &c. 1 John ii. 19, 20. Thus it appears, that a *visible* and *vital* union to Christ are very *distinct*; and yet they are not *opposites*, for a *profession* of Christ cannot be deemed *contrary* to a *possession* of him. Again, *vital* union, is *distinct* from *virtual*, though one is not contrary or opposite to the other. —By *virtual* union with Christ, is intended a real *connection* subsisting between him and the elect of

God considered simply as such. That there was such a connection *antecedent* to vital union, is evident from the following considerations. They were chosen in Christ, and given to him; in covenant he represented them as a federal head. He became a *surety* for them, and on their behalf was made *under the law*, in consequence of which there was a *legal* connection of union established between *him* and *them*. The *substitution* of his person under the law in their stead, was the ground of the *imputation* of their sins to him, and of his obedience for them. What he did, and endured, would have had no *efficacy* in *their* favour, had they not been personally interested in him. Their sins could not have been done away by the sacrifice of himself, had he not given himself *for them* in particular, or died in their stead. But, as their kinsman Redeemer he ransomed them from death, and as the head of the church, he became the Saviour of the body. Thus was he related to his chosen, as their head of representation, and as their surety, by his gracious engagements and condescending substitution of his person in their law place; and by his performing for them, what was required of them, He became *The Lord their righteousness*, and by his death he procured on their behalf an eternal exemption from deserved punishment, and a legal title to everlasting bliss. In consequence of this union,

the elect were intrusted to his care, and were *preserved in Christ Jesus*, and therefore *called to be saints*. By virtue of the aforesaid connection, they are said to be his sheep, whom he must bring; for of all that the father hath given him, he will lose none: and from thence ariseth the propriety of the apostle's language in Eph. ii. 4, 6. God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even *when we were dead in sins*, hath quickened us *together* with Christ, and hath raised us up *together*, and made us sit *together* in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Now as this *virtual* union does not supersede *vital*, or render it *unnecessary*, but is the secret *source* from whence it flows, why then should the godly quarrel one with another about what is so evidently consistent? Though *fruit* be only found in the *branches*, yet the *root* is surely not unprofitable, seeing from thence the *sap* of the *tree* proceeds. According to this simile we may observe, what the scripture calls *Bringing forth fruit unto God*, can *only* be expected among professors of religion, who are in Christ as visible branches. But even amongst them, there will no fruit be found without sap or living nourishment; and there can be no vital nourishment, but in consequence of union *with the root*. As none ever imagine there is *no connection between the root and branches of a tree till blossoms appear*, why then should any think

there is no connection between Christ the root of the righteous, and his people, *before* the appearance of grace? It is owing to the appearance of gracious dispositions, that a relation to Christ is discovered, or claimable by any person whatever : nevertheless, the union or relation in the last sense in which we have been speaking, does not then commence. If there was no *previous* secret connection with Christ, from whence did grace proceed to the soul? It must have a source or original cause. The apostle observes all spiritual blessings were given us in Christ; Eph. i. 3. If Christ was intrusted with *all* spiritual blessings to communicate to his people, then *no* spiritual blessing is ever possessed, but what flows from him; and if so, there must be a *prior* connection with him. Believers have reason gratefully to acknowledge that they all have received out of his fulness, grace for grace; John i. 16. To the hesitating soul we would recommend a close consideration of the apostle's query; What hast thou, that thou didst not receive? 1 Cor. iv. 7.

The doctrine of *union* between Christ and his church, is of a nature so *copious*, that no one metaphor can *properly* represent it; therefore in the scriptures we meet with *various* similitudes, tending to illustrate the important subject. Christ is frequently compared to a *foundation*, on which *is* people are built; but that conveying only the

idea of *support*, therefore he is compared to a *root*, by which the idea of *influence* is likewise illustrated. But though *branches* are influenced, and rendered fruitful, in consequence of conveyed nourishment, yet christian *activity* is not thereby properly represented: to supply this defect, Christ and his people are farther illustrated by the union subsisting between *head* and *members*. But though the idea of *activity* is thereby conveyed, there is still a material defect, for the relation between these is quite *involuntary*. Had it been otherwise the *head* might possibly have chose better *feet*, or better *hands*, and had *they* been the subjects of distinct volition, they would probably have chose to have been in union with a better *head*; therefore to supply the deficiency of the above simile, and to include the idea of *mutual choice* and *social endearments*, Christ and his church are compared to *husband* and *wife*. If then we are in such near and close connection with the blessed Jesus, as the scriptures assert, and by so many significant similitudes illustrate his own people to be, let us frequently think of, and bless God for, that *sovereign* and *inseparable* love which constituted the relation. It is all of God, as is devoutly acknowledged by *that sweet singer* in our British Israel, the late *Dr. Watts*, who of the father's love and choice thus *speaks* :

Christ be my first elect he said,
 Then chose our souls in Christ our head ;
 Nor shall our souls be thence remov'd,
 Till he forgets his first belov'd.

As there are unhappy differences among the professors of religion about union to Christ, so in like manner are they subject to cast stumbling-blocks in each other's way, respecting, fifthly,

RELATION TO GOD.

For the removal of which, and the purpose of reconciliation, let us consider on what relation to God is founded. That relation in which God's people stand unto himself distinct from others, according to the scripture, arises from *adoption* and *regeneration*. Adoption is a taking those into the relation of sons, and treating them as such who are not so by nature. Now God's people were all by nature aliens : but by adopting grace were by him considered as his children. Again his people are all his children by *birth*, being born again, they possess, or partake of his nature, as it consisteth in righteousness and true holiness, and so bear his image. Adoption constitutes relation, but does not convey likeness of nature ; but regeneration does both. *Adoption is before, or antecedent to regeneration, for there is no propriety in supposing the*

are made sons by adoption, who are so by birth. No man ever adopted his own son; those who are sons by nature, need not be made sons by adoption. Though the persons who *are* regenerated were adopted, yet they were not adopted *as* regenerate, but when they were in a state of alienation from God. In which state all men are by nature as the descendants of an apostate-head. Adoption is therefore the taking those into the relation of children, who are not so by nature, or reckoning, or accounting those sons, who are not so by generation. Relation by adoption is therefore quite distinct from sonship, arising from regeneration, or a being generated, and born again, and accordingly we find it treated of as a separate subject in the word of God. Adoption is an act of God's sovereign *will*, according to Eph. i. 5, 6. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will; to the praise and glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. Regeneration is the work of his power, it is a manifest change of soul produced by his Holy Spirit. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he *saved* us by the washing of regeneration, and *renewing of the Holy Ghost*; Tit. iii. 5. The *people of God* considered as children by adop-

tion, were the subjects of redemption. Being through sin in a state of distance and dreadful captivity, Christ gave his life a ransom for them. He died the just for the unjust, that he might bring them to God. Hence those who were sometime afar off are made nigh by the blood of his Son. It was therefore expedient that Christ should die for the people, and gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad; John xi. 50, 52. For it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory to make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through sufferings; Heb. ii. 10. They were not redeemed, considered as *saints*, but as *sinners*, not redeemed as *children*, by *regeneration*, but as *sons* by *adoption*, and of them as such Christ will at last say, Father, here am I and the children thou hast given me. The application of redeeming *love*, and the possession of the Redeemer's *purchase* is not enjoyed, nor by them desired till renewed in the spirit of their minds; but being God's adopted sons, therefore in his account they were entitled to them, and because they were sons, the Spirit of Christ is sent into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father. It is owing to the spirit of adoption, or the Holy Ghost bearing witness to their relationship as the children of God, that they are delivered from that bondage

and fear, which would otherwise overwhelm them in consequence of a sight and sense of criminal distance from God, and unlikeness to him; Rom. viii. 15, 17.. The bodies of God's people were included in the act of adoption, and with their souls were given to Christ, and bought by him; ye are bought with a price, wherefore glorify God with your bodies which are his. But though the members of the body are instruments of righteousness unto holiness, in consequence of a person being renewed in the spirit of his mind, yet while in this life the bodies of the saints have no peculiar marks of divine sonship, but are subject to vanity, bondage, and corruption. The privileges of adoption therefore, as relating to them, will not be enjoyed till the resurrection, for the bodies of *all* men through sin are the seat of misery, and not only bodies in general, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body; Rom. viii. 23. Sonship by *adoption* is not *contrary* to, nor does it render relationship to God by *regeneration* UNNECESSARY, there is as much need of a *meetness* for heaven as a *title* to it. In order to consummate happiness, it is as necessary to have a *disposition*, or *taste*, for pure and refined pleasure, as it is to be delivered from pain. Therefore

except a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of God, he cannot see it in its nature, beauty, and spiritual glory, for the natural man perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. Hence (says Christ) ye must be born again. The doctrine of adoption is supporting to the believer's hope, even when he loaths and bemoans himself on the account of transgressions, for the very name Jesus (a Saviour) was given to Immanuel, because he should save *his* people from their sins; Matth. i. 21. But considered as born again, they are not denominated sinners but saints, for he that is born of God sinneth not. Sin is not his occupation. By adoption God's people were in point of *relation* made near to him, as respecting their persons. By regeneration they become followers of him as dear children, through their being the subjects of gracious principles and holy dispositions. To conclude, as sonship amongst men ariseth from adoption, and likewise from natural descent, or generation; the Lord therefore, more fully to express his love to his people, and the ground of their claim or title to heavenly things, has been pleased to discover himself as their father, under both considerations; which if properly attended to by the household of faith, their differences would in some measure subside, and their diffi-

culties in some degree diminish ; for according to the scriptural account of relation to God, they are most certainly right who say, that by regeneration or heavenly birth, the people of God are denominated sons in a proper sense, and in which sense they were not his children *before*, for we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus ; and if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his ; and those who heartily subscribe to this truth, may surely without offence be allowed to say, that by adoption they were constituted sons before believing ; for none are denominated believers till born of God, and it would be absurd to suppose they were not till then adopted. Equally absurd as to suppose Adam adopted Abel, or that it is necessary for his Majesty to adopt the Prince of Wales. When the scriptures treat only of men's relation to God, it is then attributed to adoption, or the gracious act of Jehovah's will towards them, which does not imply, but is distinct from his powerful influences in and upon them. But when *likeness* and *relation* to God are jointly considered, an heavenly birth is then intended or included. For, the holy spirit's operations in the souls of men, are illustrated by natural generation ; *because*, such are thereby made *partakers of the divine image*, as it consisteth in *righteousness and true holiness*. The conside-

ration of these things, it is hoped, may tend to reconcile the minds of some of the people of God, and prevent their falling out by the way.

THE DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT.

This important truth is attended with divers difficulties, which are perplexing to various weak christians, the removal of which calls for serious attention to its nature and necessity. *Atonement* signifies reconciliation, or appeasing of anger; to atone is to harmonize or bring parties to an agreement that were at variance, or to remove that distance and disaffection which have subsisted between parties offended, so as to be at one again, or brought into a state of friendship, amity, and good-will. The atonement under present consideration is that by, or on the account of which, God is pacified towards, or pardons the sins of his people. Various ideas are included in the term, as used in scripture, but they are all of a kindred nature, and adhere to the important doctrine, as their central point, tending to explain its natural origin and efficacy. In order to obtain a distinct view of the subject, it may be proper to observe,

First, It supposes the party to have been justly injured to whom satisfaction is due. *This was in fact the case in respect of God. Men, all men,*

are become enemies to him without any reason which can possibly exculpate them from blame. His law which men have broke was in every respect reasonable and right. His authority, though indisputably the highest and best founded, is treated by man with the greatest contempt. The moral beauty and excellency of God is become disgusting to his rebellious creatures. As Jehovah is the first, the best, and most worthy of all beings, it is fit he should value and esteem his own glory in proportion to its worth, which is infinitely more excellent and dear to him than all creatures in heaven and earth. But man has set up his own honour and happiness in opposition to God's, and (as it were) deifies himself and debases Jehovah, to whom he pays no further regard, than he apprehends will terminate in his own advantage. God's anger is righteous displeasure, for men have hated him without a cause, there was nothing in his nature, character, or commands with which men could be justly displeased. God never did any thing to provoke his creatures to revolt; if he had, he would have been under obligation to have made satisfaction to man for the injury done him in order to an honourable reconciliation, that man might be just, and the Justifier of God, which is shocking to suppose, *therefore,*

Secondly, The atonement supposes the offend-

ing party, *man*, to have been justly deserving punishment, and exposed to misery. If he was not exposed to misery there could have been no need of the exercise of mercy : and if he was the real offender, something was needful to atone for the offence, in order to a restoration of friendship between him and his creator. There is a prevalent conviction attending guilt, of the necessity of something to recommend to and pacify offended deity. It is not against atonement that men are naturally prejudiced ; but it is only that of God's providing, to which they have an enmity and aversion. Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the most high God? is the common and grand inquiry of a guilty mind. It is not a bowing before him, either in a way of submission, confession, supplication, or obedience, that will satisfy for past offences, but something that has worth and efficacy to atone for the sin of the soul, in order to an acceptable coming to, and bowing before the most high God ; therefore thousands of rams, ten thousand of rivers of oil, and even the first born of the body is thought of for the purpose of pleasing an offended God. He hath shewn thee, O man (in his word) what is good for the pacification of divine justice, and what he requires of thee, as a grateful return for the inestimable favour ; Mic. vi. 6, 7, 8. Not all created

good (was it at the sinner's disposal) could compensate for the injury done to Jehovah's righteous law and equitable government, because it bears no proportion to an infinite evil; therefore the wisdom of men and angels could never have pointed out a method for the exercise of mercy consistent with the natural rights of justice and truth. But God, through infinite wisdom and sovereign love, has made a gracious proclamation in favour of criminal man, saying, Deliver his soul from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom or an atonement; this was entirely a new procedure, the effect of a new and well-ordered covenant, according to his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. There was nothing in God's law, nothing in the original constitution of things, nor any known property in deity from whence it could be inferred, that mercy would ever be shewn to man, or friendship be restored between him and his justly offended Sovereign. The gracious intention was *hid* in God; Eph. iii. 9. Yea, had an intimation been given of the kind design, the nature of atonement is such that created wisdom could never have guessed *how*, or by whom it could be accomplished. For,

1. *The person undertaking to atone, must have been able to have offered to God that which was infinite in its worth and value.*

2. That he be man capable of obeying the law, and bearing its tremendous curse without personal and perpetual destruction.

3. He who atones for another's crimes ought himself to be innocent, otherwise an atonement would be needful on his own account, and therefore whatever he might do or endure for the purpose of reconciliation, could not properly be imputed to, or benefit any other guilty person. But among men, where could perfect innocence be found, seeing the whole world is become guilty before God? But supposing such a one could have been found, an atonement would not have appeared possible, because,

4. Equity cannot allow an innocent person to suffer punishment. It is contrary to the natural rule of right; penal punishment cannot be inflicted but in consequence of guilt: therefore he that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord; Prov. xvii. 15. And shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? It is not possible he should do that which is abhorrent to his nature, and abominable in his sight; therefore as a God of equity he cannot clear the guilty, nor punish the innocent. Again,

5. He who is supposed to endure vicarious punishment, or suffer in the room and stead of another, must stand in such prior relation to

union with him, on whose behalf he is punished, as is necessary to support the delinquent's claim to an equitable discharge. But where could such a friend be found, standing judicially related to miserable man, to act as his surety, or as a day's-man, between him and his God, and lay his hand upon them both? Job ix. 33. xvii. 3. But on a supposition such a friend could have been pointed out, who was allowedly one in law with the sinner, yet he could not die, or suffer in his stead, though even desirous of it, because,

6. No creature has power or authority over his own life, to lay it down when he pleases, nor even to suffer mutilation on behalf of his dearest friend, for his life and his limbs are at the sole and only disposal of God, in whom we all live and move, and from whom we have our beings. From the above, and such-like considerations, it appears, that the nature of sin, and the condition of men, were such as totally to preclude every ray of hope, yea, every idea of the possibility of an atonement being made, or a reconciliation accomplished. But in the glorious gospel, God has opened a door of hope for lost sinners. He has graciously provided and revealed a method of salvation, which finite wisdom could never *have deemed possible*, a contrivance wherein he *hath abounded towards us, in all wisdom and prudence; Eph. i. 8.* For how does every diffi-

culty vanish when the glorious Immanuel is viewed as the atoning priest and bleeding victim. Here is infinite worth, value and virtue, infinite ability to obey the precepts of the law, and endure its awful penalty, without sustaining the loss of final felicity. He was holy, harmless, and separate from sinners. But that he might legally suffer the just for the unjust, He who knew no sin was made sin for us. The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all, which he bore in his own body on the tree, when he made his soul an offering for sin. Thus, through imputation, he was numbered with transgressors and bore the sins of many, which he put away by the sacrifice of himself. What he did and endured in the room and stead of his people was righteously placed to their account. *He* being graciously substituted in their stead, being their surety made under the law, that he might redeem them from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them. He therefore kindly gave his life a ransom for his people, for he had authority and power to lay down his life, and power to take it up again. This commandment, says he, I received of my Father: his propitiatory death was according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, and agreeable to the everlasting covenant; and therefore with his full approbation and free consent, for the counsel of peace

was between them both, (which will ever continue) and his delights were with the sons of men.

Christ's atonement was illustrated by, and the central point of the various ceremonial atonements under the law; the respective victims were without blemish, were the property of the persons on whose account they were to be offered, the crimes they were designed to expiate and atone for, were first solemnly confessed over them, and then as having sin placed on or transferred to them, they were offered up as the sinner's substitute, in consequence of which temporary forgiveness was obtained; for these were only shadows of good things to come, and were offered year by year continually, but could never make the comers thereunto perfect, or take away sin as pertaining to the conscience. The law could make nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, see Heb. x. *Atonement*, is a declaration of divine righteousness, and a vindication of Jehovah's justice in condemning and punishing for sin; therefore the act of Phineas, in taking vengeance in behalf of God on daring offenders, is called an atonement for the congregation. Atonement is designed as a covering of the guilty soul, thereby their iniquities are covered and their transgressions are forgiven. *When the congregation was numbered, it was enjoined on every man to give to the Lord a*

ransom for his soul ; the rich were not to give more than half a shekel *, nor the poor less, which was called atonement money, as thereby atonement was made for their souls. In consequence of which price, they were covered from the plague to which they were liable. See Exod. xxx. 12, 16. So Jesus gave himself a ransom for many : his people were bought with a price, not with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of the Son of God, in whom we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins. By the blessed Jesus, the purity of God's law was fully approved and eternally preserved, its righteous claims established and fully confirmed ; its tremendous curse was by him endured, and his people exempted from wrath to come. In him mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other. He is the true antitype of the mercy-seat, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. The seat of mercy where deity appeared propitious was the cover of, and supported by the ark which contained and preserved the holy law which men had violated, denoting that the glory of God's righteous government must be secured before pardoning mercy could be discovered. To deny the glory and equity of God's

* About fifteen pence, and so within the compass of the poor.

law, by which sinners are condemned, antecedent to the gospel, is to undermine the foundation of mercy, and destroy the pillars which support the throne of rich, reigning grace. The blood of atonement sprinkled annually on the mercy-seat by the high priest, was an acknowledgment of Israel's guilt and Jehovah's just authority, and likewise their absolute dependance on his voluntary mercy, richly dispensed and gloriously displayed, consistent with his infinite hatred to sin, and inflexible regard to impartial justice and punitive equity.—Some represent the atonement of Christ as unnecessary, in order to the pardon of sin, the remission of which is by them considered as an act of divine clemency, without respect had to any merit attending the sufferings of Christ in the stead of those whose transgressions are forgiven, by which many have been perplexed, seeing such a representation and view of things evidently tends to lessen the odious nature of sin, tarnisheth the lustre of Jehovah's character, and diminisheth the believer's obligation to Jesus. We therefore shall consider,

1. It is undeniable that a consciousness of sin is attended with a fear of punishment in those who are not favoured with a divine revelation.

Hence the apostle, speaking of the heathen world, says, Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of

death ; Rom. i. 32. But if punishment be not necessarily connected with transgression, how could the dread of suffering and a conviction of the righteousness of God in taking vengeance, be so deeply engraven on the hearts of those, who did not know the will and determination of God, but as inferred from the natural obligation his creatures are under to glorify him as their Creator ? No creature can possibly know what originates in, or is dependant upon the sovereign will of God without a divine revelation ; but as the punishment of sin is knowable where a revelation is not, therefore the punishment of sin ariseth not from divine sovereignty, but from the essential purity, dignity, and rectitude of Jehovah's nature ; there was a necessity for Christ as the surety to endure the penalty, in order to his people's enjoying a pardon ; for sin is so abominable in God's sight, so contrary to his pure nature, that punishment for it cannot be dispensed with, a sinner as such cannot be safe. Hence there was a necessity for Jesus the Saviour to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself, to endure the curse that his people might be exempted from sin's demerit, enjoy heavenly blessings, and wear the celestial crown.

2. Through the sufferings of Christ the essential righteousness of God is discovered, and his *quity in acquitting the believer is thereby evi-*

from thence conclude, it was impossible for the connection between *sin* and *suffering* to be broken? Who can attend to the tremendous language of a sin-avenging God, saying, Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow, smite him; or seriously reflect on the doleful groans and bloody sufferings of the Son of God, in the garden, and on the cross, and calmly conclude there was no necessity for any thing of that nature?

5. Those who are redeemed from sin, and reign with God in heavenly pomp and holy splendour, ascribe their deliverance and advancement to the kindness of Christ, and the efficacy of his sufferings; for with triumphant pleasure and gratitude they sing unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen; Rev. i. 5, 6. But how does the propriety of such acknowledgments appear, if what Jesus did was not at all necessary to their deliverance from sin, and advancement to dignity and delight? From the above considerations it appears, there was a necessity for Jesus to die, the just for the unjust, that he might bring them to God.

Some again admit the death of Christ was necessary, in order to the forgiveness of sins, yet deny *him the honour* of properly meriting for his people *an exemption from punishment*, and assert, that

the efficacy of his sufferings as a sacrifice arose entirely from the will and appointment of God. That he became a mediator, surety, and sacrifice on behalf of his people, in consequence of divine appointment, is undoubtedly evident; but that his *value* and worth, efficacy and merit, arose from thence can never be proved. God graciously provided and found the ransom, on which account pardon, justification, and the whole of salvation is all of grace, free exuberant grace, and rich mercy; that a person of such infinite worth and dignity as Immanuel, God's own, and only begotten Son; should die for sinners, is an unparalleled instance of favour and love. It is the wonder of angels, the terror of devils, and the joy and triumph of saints. But it is absurd to suppose his personal dignity arose from his debasement, that he became strong because help was laid upon him, or that his real worth arose from his appointment to ransom miserable captives, and discharge the debt of prodigal transgressors. Christ was appointed, and agreed in covenant to do, and suffer, what he was under no natural obligation to perform or endure; and, from his native dignity, worth, and ability, arose his merit and efficacy. To suppose God appointed his death to be efficacious without real efficacy, or meritorious without personal merit, is a contradiction in terms, an awful reflection on the divine understanding, and

an affront to common sense. Again, if God accepted of the death of Jesus as meritorious, though it was not so in its own nature; then might he have pardoned sins by a simple act of sovereign clemency without the death of his Son, for it would surely have been equally just to have pardoned sin without a sacrifice, as to remit sin in consequence of that which is in its nature destitute of merit and efficacy. Once more, if merit and real efficacy arise only from the divine appointment, it would have been possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to have taken away sin, or any other animal would have been sufficient for the removal of guilt and saving lost sinners, if God had but pleased to have appointed such an end to have been answered by their death. But the direct contrary to the above is asserted by one who well understood, and delighted in the doctrine of reconciliation. His words are, For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins; Heb. x. 4, which sacrifices can never take away sins; verse 11. It was necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. But now once in the end of the world hath he (*Christ*) appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; chap. ix. 23, 26. He hath made peace by the blood of his cross; Heb. ix. 12.

having obtained eternal redemption for us, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, with which the Lord is well pleased; Isaiah xlii. 21. Therefore to every believer Jehovah says, Fury is not in me; Isaiah xxvii. 4.

It is hoped the above remarks may help the entangled Christian over the objections made against the necessity, merit, and efficacy of the Saviour's death, as an atoning sacrifice for sin, and tend to increase his knowledge of, faith in, and love to the blessed Jesus, as able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. I should therefore add no more on the subject, were it not for another stumbling-block lately thrown in the way of believers, equally if not more formidable in appearance than the above. Which is, if Christ was a divine person he could not atone for sin, because Deity could not die.

This artful objection seems intended to draw the unwary Christian into a dreadful dilemma, either to give up the soul-supporting doctrine of the atonement, or to deny the divinity of the Son of God. The objection is the more dangerous as it seems to look on the doctrine of atonement with a smiling approving countenance. But in fact, the design of it is to undermine the real personal merit of Christ, and place the efficacy

his blood, to the account of God's appointment, as mentioned above. The evident, though disguised intention of the objection and language is plainly this : " Sinners, you must be content with a finite creature Saviour, or none at all. If Christ be God, he is too great to do you any essential service as a Saviour, because Deity cannot die. Therefore do not think sin is infinitely odious and hateful to God. It does not demerit infinite displeasure and punishment. If it did, there could be no infinite satisfaction made to God, for even supposing Christ to be divine, his sacrifice could not be of infinite value, because as a divine person he could not die." Let us calmly consider this formidable objection, and seriously attend to the supposed dreadful dilemma, in which will be found more artful sophistry, than argument and solid sense.

Death always implies a separation, or a loss of that wherein life consisted. Death, in the sense we are now called to consider it, is a separation of the principle of sensation and influence; thus it is said, The body without the spirit is dead. Without the soul it is in a state of total inactivity, incapable of voluntary motion, and divested of all sensation. Now though the body only be the *subject of death*, considered as a state of *inactivity and insensibility*, yet the man is said to be dead, *when soul and body*, the constituent parts of hu-

manity, are separated, although the soul or spirit distinctly considered from the body is not the subject of death. A spirit cannot die, because it is of a simple or uncompounded nature. There is no part of a soul, from whence another part of itself can be separated, or divided. If a soul can be so separated, consciousness either does, or does not; continue in each separated part. If each part remain conscious, then are they two souls, or two conscious substances. If one separated part of the soul remain unconscious or in a state of insensibility, wherein does that supposed unconscious part differ from matter? A created spirit might cease to exist, if God so determined; but die it cannot. Annihilation is not death. What is annihilated has no existence, but what is dead exists, however its form be changed. There is therefore no force in the objection, *Deity cannot die*, for as no spirit can die, it might as pertinently be objected, if Christ had a soul he could not atone for sin, because a soul cannot die. But the death of a spirit cannot be supposed: in that case, death is not predicable, yet a man being composed of body and spirit, is with propriety said to be dead, when matter and mind, those constituent parts of humanity, are separated. Dead saints are therefore said to rest in their beds in respect of their bodies; yet in reference to their souls, each one is walking in his upright

ness. Death is therefore called a departure. The time of my departure is at hand. Now as the divine and human spirit of our Immanuel ceased to animate his body, the person of the Mediator may as properly be said to have been dead, as the person of Samuel, David, or any other. It may be necessary to observe, that death does not dissolve the *relation* between the body and spirit, but death consists in a total cessation of vital influence, or a removal from the body for a period, the principle of *sensation* and *animation*. But the relative union still continuing, therefore the spirits of martyrs are represented as concerned about, and longing for their bodies, which were killed for the cause of Christ on earth, and at the resurrection every soul will have its *own* body. As through the separation of body and soul, and the relation between them being undissolved, the *man* is properly dead, and yet the soul not changed in its natural powers ; so in like manner, and for the same reason, it appears the person of the Mediator was really dead for a time, his precious body not being *animated* by, though related to his human and divine spirit. Yet his death does not imply or suppose the least *change* or mutability in his divine nature, nor any alteration in *the powers and properties* of his soul. Agreeably to the above view of things we are told, that when the beloved disciple saw his Lord in transcendent

splendour, and majestic glory, and fell at his feet as dead, the reviving and compassionate language of Jesus was, Fear not, I am the first and the last, he that liveth and was dead, and behold I live for evermore, amen; and have the keys of hell and death; Rev. i. 17, 18. That he the first and the last was dead, is again repeated in the solemn message sent to the church at Smyrna; Rev. ii. 8. Thus it appears that there is no force at all in the objection aforesaid, for instead of Christ's divinity rendering him incapable of atoning for sin, the infinite virtue and value attending the sufferings of his humanity, arose from its union with the divine nature, as one person. By virtue of which union his blood is divinely precious, and called the blood of God: like as the spirits under the altar call the blood with which they sealed their testimony for God, when in the body, *our blood**.

* To elucidate the above subject and render it plain to young christians, it may not be amiss to observe the following easy illustrative gradations; there is a value or worth attending simple matter considered as the production of God, who made every thing good, yea very good; yet animated matter is superior to what is not so, though it wear an inferior form, otherwise a living dog would not be better than a dead lion, nor the body of a man preferable to a bag of sand. Animated bodies rise in value and respect, in proportion to the natural superiority of the spirits by which they are governed and influenced; though the body of a sparrow is the subject of animation as much as the body of a man, yet a human body is of more value than

May the Lord the spirit bless these attempts to remove the stumbling-blocks out of the way of serious inquirers after the truth as it is in Jesus.

PART II.

EXPERIENCE.

Stumbling-blocks relating to CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE are various, and what generally appears first in view is, respecting what right or warrant an undone sinner hath to apply to Jesus as a Saviour. It is common for those who are convinced of sin, and see the need of salvation, to look for some good thing in them, as the ground of encouragement for their applying to, and closing with the blessed Jesus. But finding themselves

many sparrows : again the importance of actions through the medium of matter arise from the volitions and influence of the spirit by which they are performed, were it not so, the actions of a man would not excel those of a monkey. Moreover, in regard to human nature there is a great disproportion in real worth, arising from internal qualities, or external dignity, for scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man, some would even dare to die. Hence David's adherents said, *Thou art worth ten thousand of us.* How infinitely precious and worthy then was the divine Jesus, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. May every believer's heart glow with love to him, and gratitude for him, and say, with unfeigned lips, Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.

altogether vile, sinful, and unworthy, they apprehend it would be daring presumption in their present condition to trust in, or apply to him for salvation. The stumbling-block in this case seems to arise from a mistaken apprehension, accounting that which supports a person's right to come to Christ is synonymous with, or equivalent to, what evidences an interest in him, or, in other words, persons want to know that they are really converted before they dare apply to Jesus. What greatly tends to entangle and retard the progress of such souls, are certain injudicious and dangerous maxims relating to *experimental religion*.

First, Some will say, and many suggest, that it is not the duty of unconverted people to pray. But if so, in order to a conviction of prayer being a duty, the prayerless person, even while continuing so, must have evidence of a conversion to God, which is ridiculously absurd. Though Peter perceived that Simon the Sorcerer was in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity, yet he directed him to penitence and prayer. It is evident there can be no gracious acts, but in consequence of gracious principles; yet it is equally evident that gracious principles cannot be discerned but by gracious acts, therefore such acts must necessarily precede or be prior to the discernment of a spiritual principle. It is therefore impossible for any man to know or feel him-

self to be the subject of grace while he is prayerless, or to have the least evidence of his relation to Christ without a reliance upon him and delight in him.

To assert therefore that persons are not to pray till they are converted, is dangerous and absurd. Dangerous, as it leads into a state of deception, into the very essence of pharisaism, for such as think themselves converted before they come to Christ, by penitential prayer and faith, found their hopes on self-righteousness, the secret language of their deceived hearts is, *God be thanked, I am not now like other men*, stand by, thou unconverted sinner, I am holier than thou. Such do not go to Christ as a trembling criminal, but a confident convert ; not as an undone sinner, but a self-admired saint. Again, such a representation is dangerous, as it tends to fatal security, and keeps a carnal mind in profound and fatal peace, for a man lives without prayer, and consequently without God, yet his conscience does not, cannot, accuse him with the neglect of duty. If he ought not to pray, an aversion to pray is not criminal but a commendable disposition, for surely a person is much to be commended for being averse to what he ought not to do. If it be said, *an unregenerate man ought not to pray, because while in such a state they are incapable of spiritual actions* ; such objectors ought to point out

what duties the unconverted can perform acceptably, or allow that they are not bound to the performance of any; and if not under obligation to obedience they are not chargeable with sin, and consequently are in a state of safety, not being exposed to punishment; for whoever are not culpable need not fear the divine displeasure. But God has said he will pour out his fury on all them who call not on his name.

It is shocking to think any poor sinner should be taught to consider himself exempted from an acknowledgment to God for the mercies he enjoys, and likewise from an application to him for present or future favours. Besides it is absurd to assert that a person ought not to pray until he feels himself converted, for it is much the same as saying a man ought not to ask for guidance, till he knows he is right, nor seek for a cure till he feels himself healed.

Secondly, A Second stumbling maxim is, no man can be the subject of genuine repentance till he beholds by faith the Redeemer as dying for his transgressions, or at least have hope that his sins are forgiven him. A poor wounded sinner not being so favoured, is thereby taught to consider the way to the Saviour as barred against him; yea to conclude it would be an affront to the Lord, a horrid provocation to God for him to pray, Take away all iniquity; or so much as to

cry, God be merciful to me a sinner; for all such language is only solemn mocking in the lips of the impenitent, and impenitent such must be who are destitute of real repentance. But is it not strange that a person cannot be sorry for a fault till he hopes he shall not be punished, nor sincerely beg for a favour till he enjoys it: how shall a person while he is in a state of impenitency know, or what is his warrant to conclude, that Christ died for him in particular? There is nothing in scripture to encourage an impenitent sinner to believe or hope he is in a safe condition, but the very reverse is plainly and awfully expressed. Thou, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Rom. ii. 5. For except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish; Luke xiii. 3. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins; but the sense of no scripture is, if God will give us assurance, or hope of a pardon, we will be faithful and just to acknowledge our offences. If there be no true repentance till the soul behold by faith the Redeemer as dying for its sins, then are we presented with a view of an impenitent believer, or one who believes his sins are pardoned, for the *commission of which he was never sorry. The scriptures represent the nature of, and connection be-*

tween repentance and faith as the very reverse to those raw and rash assertions before referred to. Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; Acts iii. 19. Repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ are subjects so important and comprehensive as to include the substance of the great apostle's ministry, the necessity of repentance in order to the hope of pardon through faith in the blood of Jesus, he constantly inculcated and testified both to the Jews and Greeks; Acts xx. 21.

Christ is exalted to give first repentance and then remission of sins to Israel; Acts v. 31. Pardon of sin is never in all the scripture declared as belonging to the impenitent, but its uniform language is agreeable to the solemn assertion of the Son of God; Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish; Luke xiii. 3, 5. Therefore the belief of a pardon is not prior to repentance: repentance indeed implies knowledge of and belief in the righteous and holy nature of God and his law, and a persuasion of personal criminality as represented in the word of God; it consists in a pungent sense of the evil of sin, a loathing and hearty forsaking it, and humiliation for it; joined *with a justification of the righteousness of God in*

passing sentence on the guilty criminal. Repentance therefore implies and is accompanied with the primary actings of faith, and is the immediate effect of grace in the soul; but the first actings of faith are not a believing the person is pardoned, nor even a reliance on Christ for the remission of sin. Nothing can be more false than that an impenitent person has a revealed right to pardon; if he ought to believe he is pardoned before he repent, then he ought to believe a lie. But the most firm, hearty, and constant belief of a falsehood will never make it a truth. To suppose a person to believe in Christ as a dying Saviour, without repentance, is the same as supposing a man to need a physician, and long for a cure while he is whole. But that such need not a physician, but they that are sick; see Matt. ix. 12. It is impossible such a faith can be right, which springs from an impenitent heart, and which consists in believing that to be a fact, of the truth of which there is no evidence. If such a faith be not genuine, how can a false faith produce true repentance? Repentance is proved to be of a genuine spiritual nature, by its continuance and increase, when the fault repented of is remitted. But the conviction of blame does not spring from *a forgiveness of the crime*. Legal repentance, *or the terrific operation of the law on the con-*

silence without the grace of the gospel, arises from the sense of danger, and is continued and increased only by the fear of punishment; therefore when danger disappears, and self is supposed to be safe, such a repentance immediately dies, the idea of danger being its sole support. But true repentance arising from a change of heart, a new and holy principle, and consisting in an aversion to sin, considered in its power and pollution as well as its punishment, therefore a sense of pardon (though it does not give existence or being to repentance) greatly increases a godly sorrow for sin, the evil of which is more deeply impressed on the mind, from a view of the Saviour's sufferings, and the infinitely amiable character of God as a righteous lawgiver, and loving Father. Such a view melts the soul into evangelical sorrow for sin, and inflames the mind with indignation against it, and a vehement desire after its total destruction; called by the apostle *vengeance*; 2 Cor. vii. 11. When God pours on his chosen the spirit of grace, he first convinceth the soul of sin, and is then to his people a spirit of supplication; and such suppliants, saith the Lord, shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son; Zech. xii. 10. The language of the true penitent under the enjoyment of a fel

pardon, is beautifully set forth in the following lines :

Whilst with a melting broken heart,
My murdered Lord I view ;
I'll raise revenge against my sins,
And slay the murderers too.

WATTS.

Again, thirdly, It is frequently asserted, that a true faith in Christ is inseparably connected with the knowledge of an interest in him, or that there can be no proper believing in Jesus, without considering him as a person's own ; this has proved a stumbling-block to many, for as common sense suggests the absolute necessity of *evidence*, in order to support a *claim*, and the soul *before* it goes to Christ, not having that evidence, therefore is discouraged from applying to him, till *proof* of an interest in him appear. Labouring in vain for marks and signs as evidences of their belonging to Christ, in order to warrant, or encourage their application to him, they conclude there is no hope, they are none of his chosen and redeemed, &c. But there is no doctrine contained in the gospel, nor even any threatening in the law of God, which is in its own nature a bar to an undone sinner's coming to *Christ for salvation*. Their right to come to Christ *does not in the least* depend upon, or arise from

a *prior* knowledge of *interest* in special blessings, or *feeling* themselves the subjects of supernatural principles. Such knowledge, such experience is impossible to be obtained, but in consequence of believing in, or receiving Jesus the Saviour, for he who believeth not is declaratively under condemnation, the wrath of God abideth on him. To attempt therefore to define as some do, who ought, and who ought not to return to God by Christ, is daring presumption, and tends to discourage, and rivet the fetters of guilt, where a sense of meanness and misery prevails, and encourages self-righteousness by establishing the idea of previous fitness in order to salvation.

If any should ask, have I a right to apply to Jesus the Saviour, simply as a poor undone perishing sinner, in whom there appears no good thing? I answer, Yes; the gospel proclamation is, Whosoever will, let him come. To you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men; Prov. viii. 4. The way to Jesus is graciously laid open for every one who chooses to come to him. His arms of mercy are expanded to receive the coming soul. Fear not, poor sinner, to approach him, he will not on any account cast thee out; John vi. 37. He does not receive with reluctance, no, it is his joy, it is his delight to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. Consider, the painful work of salvation is now wit-

him for ever over. His endearing *invitations* to poor heavy-laden sinners, his melting *expostulations* with them, and gracious *reception* of them, are left on record, as the warrant, and for the encouragement of sinners; therefore the worst of such, even the vilest of the vile, may come and apply to him for salvation from sin and sorrow. However remote you are, however great the distance from him, he kindly invites you to view him as the almighty Saviour; saying, *Behold me! Behold me!* Isaiah lxxv. 1. *Look unto me all ye ends of the earth and be ye saved, for I am God, and there is none else*; Isaiah xlii. 22. The gracious grant is indefinite, the way to Jesus is open and free for *whosoever will*, without exception; nothing that God has done, or said, is in its nature an obstacle. None can in truth say they desire salvation, but may not apply for it, or cannot attain it. To infer that personal unworthiness, or any scriptural doctrine, is a bar in their way to Jesus, is either the effect of strong temptations, or owing to the want of attention to the grace of God displayed in the gospel. There is no preventive bar in the sinner's way to the Saviour, but what ariseth from a carnal heart; such as impenitency for sin, an attachment to self-righteousness, and an avowed aversion to the holy perfections of God and his *vereign methods* of grace. But let it be obser

that a *grant* to *come* to Christ does not support a *claim*, or give a right to conclude they shall be saved by him. No, such a conclusion is only inferible from our having really believed in his name; a right to go to Christ is no proof we have done so. What *evidences* a person's being a true believer is quite distinct from what *warrants* his applying to the Saviour: the latter arises from what God in his word *says* to him; the former appears from the change which is *wrought* in him. To put persons therefore upon examining themselves whether they have faith, before they believe, is extremely injudicious, and to encourage professors in the persuasion they are believers, without scripture evidence of an internal change is awfully dangerous.

It would be a great advantage to inquiring souls, and discouraged christians, as well as presumptuous professors, to have right ideas of the nature of faith, or what it is to believe to the saving of the soul. Faith is a believing the divine testimony. For he that believeth not maketh God a liar. Faith in Christ is a crediting what the scriptures assert concerning him; which may be comprized in the following three things, *That he is,—what he is,—and whose he is.*—The first is absolutely necessary, for, saith Jesus, *Except ye believe that I am he, viz. the real and true Messiah, the promised Saviour, ye shall die*

in your sins. But it is not enough to believe this, which wicked men may do, Simon the sorcerer did, and devils believe it and tremble. These evil spirits knew him to be Christ the Son of the living God ; Luke iv. 41.—But true faith, with which salvation is connected, consisteth in believing likewise, *what he is*. Facts, respecting his person, offices, works, and relations, may be assented to, by such who have no faith in his excellency ; but have an enmity against *what he is*. But to them that believe Christ is precious, He is declared to be the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. The gracious soul heartily believes him to be so, and therefore can sincerely adopt the language as his own. His personal qualities, with the nature and design of his work, and offices, the real christian believes. He gives credit to the divine testimony, not only in respect of its *reality*, but likewise its holy *nature* and spiritual *tendency*. The tidings concerning the person of Christ, and his infiniteness of merit, and grace, are declared to be good, as well as true ; the renewed soul believes them to be so, even the only satisfying portion that an immortal mind can possess. He receives *them as every way suited* to his present circumstances, *as guilty* and impure ; being divinely adapted to render him holy and happy for ever. *This is what* the scripture calls an embracing

when true faith is the subject under immediate consideration. See Heb. xi. 13.

Special faith is differently denominated in scripture, but always exactly corresponding with the various representations of Christ in the gospel. Is he lifted up as an object to be beheld? Believers look to him as the wounded Jews did to the brazen serpent lifted up in the wilderness for their relief. Is he a *gift*? Faith as such *receives* him. As he is called the *bread of life*, believing is termed an *eating* or *living* upon him. Considering him as a *support*, faith is described as a *leaning* upon him. He is called a *faithful friend*; and faith is then denominated a *confiding*, or *trusting* in him. He is set forth as a *refuge*, and faith is then termed a *running* or *flying* to him for *safety*. He is represented as the *husband* of his people, and then their faith is called *giving themselves to him*. Many more instances might be produced of the diversification of believing in Christ, according as its object is represented; for the purpose of setting forth the various infinite blessings in him, and benefits flowing from him, who is the real believer's *all in all*. But I hope the above few instances may suffice to illustrate the true christian's belief in Jesus respecting *what he is*. To which faith, salvation is inseparably connected in the scriptures of truth.—As to faith in the third sense, i. e. *Whom he is*. Faith, or believing in the

last sense, if right, must be founded on the divine word as well as the former; for that must ~~stand~~ which has not *thus saith the Lord*, for its *support*. If faith be a believing the divine testimony, then the grand inquiry ought to be, who the scriptures declare to be interested in Christ. To enforce the solemn inquiry, and lead to solid satisfaction in a matter so infinitely important, we may observe two things, which I suppose will readily be granted by every person of common understanding.

1. All men are not savingly interested in Christ, for some are declared to be none of his.

2. No man is described as belonging to Christ by his personal name, situation in life, external profession, natural connections, or descent; therefore it follows, that some other description of the persons must be sought for, distinct from the above, on which the belief of a saving interest in Christ may be founded. Who then have a right according to scripture to conclude Christ is theirs, and they are his? Some there are whose common reply to the important query is, *Christ belongs to those who believe themselves savingly interested in him*. But the query returns, On what is such a faith or belief founded? If their right to Christ arise from believing him to be theirs, they had *no title to him* before they so believed; therefore *the thing was false* when they first believed it

true, and it is very extraordinary indeed that a *falsehood* should become a *fact*, by its being *confidently believed* or *industriously propagated*. Faith makes no *alteration* in the *nature* of the thing believed. What is *true* does not become *false*, because it is discredited. Nor is it possible a *lie* should change its *nature*, and become *true*, however a person may strive to keep up a *firm* persuasion of its being a *fact*, and labour against *doubting* its reality. It might be happy for such professors, whose faith is founded on *falsehood*, if they could be made ashamed of their assurance, by a deep conviction of their being under a strong delusion, that they believe a lie, and rejoice in a thing of nought. (See 2 Thes. ii. 11. Amos vi. 13.) In which condition those most certainly are, who believe Christ is theirs without any scriptural evidence to support the persuasion. But, alas! the bands of such are generally made strong by the joy that accompanies their confidence, for taking it for granted their faith is right, they apply to themselves the promises of salvation, and think it would be a sin to doubt of their safety, and a much greater to cast away their confidence, which they apprehend will meet with a great recompence of reward. Such despise all evidences of a change of heart, and of the disposition of the soul, as legal and low: their maxim is, *The weaker the evidence, the stronger*

the faith. Some of the class referred to have defined faith to consist in a believing *Christ died for my sins in particular.* Such a definition to be sure is consistent enough with the sentiment of universal redemption. For all who believe that doctrine must have such a faith, unless they should happen to doubt their being of the human species. But that faith does not insure the salvation of any man, unless all men be saved. Nay, if the sentiment aforesaid be granted, the salvation of no man can be inferred from an interest in the Saviour's death, because each of those in hell, (if it be allowed any of the human race are there) may with as much truth as those in heaven say, *Jesus loved me, and gave himself for me.* Such a faith is therefore destitute of evidence of a saving interest in Christ. Others have asserted that faith is a believing *Christ to be a person's own, without any evidence from scripture, sense, or reason.* Be not discouraged, ye seeking souls, with the boasted attainments of such believers as aforesaid, who glory in their freedom from doubts about their soul's salvation. You have a more sure word of testimony to which ye do well to take heed, as to a light shining in a dark place. God has in his word given a full description of all those who *are interested in Christ, and are as such heirs of his salvation;* those who answer the description *have a right to conclude, that Through the grace*

of the Lord Jesus they shall be saved. Those who have not the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, (however they may make their boast of God, as the carnal Jews did) they are none of his; Rom. viii. 9. and they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts; Gal. v. 24, they give full consent to the death of sin, and heartily cry respecting all their iniquities, Away with them, crucify them. They wish every sin to be the object of universal contempt, and would gladly put them to open shame. They account them the worst enemies to God and their souls; and such is their enmity against those grand deceivers, that nothing can satisfy them short of their total destruction. The spirit of God in the word, in describing the character of real saints, *Beareth witness with our spirits*, which are conscious of a real change, *that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus*; Rom. viii. 16, 17. Therefore, he that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself. That is, he is conscious of the acts of his own soul, that they are in *nature* and *kind*, however they are deficient in *degree*, what the people of God in the scriptures are *described* by.

Every Christian therefore habitually believes that such persons who answer to the description of saints, whether themselves or others, shall have

everlasting life, (and that no other but such shall be saved). He that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son, and this is the record that God hath given to *us* eternal life; and this life is in his Son; 1 John v. 10, 11. There is a cordial believing in Christ respecting both, *That he is*, and *what he is*, and likewise respecting *whose he is*, in reference to the true character of those interested in him, before the believer may be fully satisfied respecting his own personal claim to Christ. The apostle Paul, writing to the saints at Ephesus, and speaking of himself and others who first trusted in Christ, he adds, *in whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth the gospel of your salvation. In whom also AFTER that ye believed ye were sealed with that holy spirit of promise*; Eph. i. 13. A seal is a visible impression made for the purpose of confirmation; the saints were not confirmed in their personal interest in the promises till after they trusted or believed in Christ. Another apostle, in a letter to the people of God in general, says, These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may *know* that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on *the name of the Son of God*; 1 John v. 13. He *had in the letter* laid down several marks, by *which the saints are distinguished from others*,

such as *obedience* to God, *hatred* to sin, and *love* to the brethren, and *hereby* (says he) we *know* that we know him ; chap. ii. 4. The weak among them which he called little children, he was confident from the appearance of *real* holiness, that they were in a happy and safe condition, having their sins forgiven for Christ's sake. Yet these were not fully confirmed, though they had believed to the saving of the soul ; therefore what he had wrote for their serious consideration, was in order that they might be *assured* of eternal life, being *included* among those of whom he speaks in the preceding verse, *That have the Son*. He supposes some professors might *believe without evidence*, and boldly say, *We have fellowship with God* ; chap. i. 6. Says another, *I know him*, chap. ii. 4, *and abide in him*, verse 6. *I love God* ; chap. iv. 20. Yea, he supposes some professors might *boast* of having attained to *sinless* perfection ; chap. i. 8. But without any ceremony he pronounceth all those who claim a title to salvation, without evidence of sanctification, to be self-deceived, and strangers to God and truth ; chap. i. 6. ii. 10. iv. 20. He calls them to the bar of conscience, and asserts that those, and those only, whose hearts do not condemn them, have confidence towards God ; chap. iii. 19, 21. Every *true christian* is possessed of what Jesus terms an *honest heart* ; Luke viii. 15. They would not

they dare not claim, or take possession of what is not their own; they are persuaded those who do, will be rejected at last, and made ashamed of their hope and presumptuous persuasion. A God of truth can never require any man to believe a falsehood; nor even any thing relating to a fact which is unrevealed. For instance, he requires men to believe there are three that bear record in heaven, and that these three are one, and the union of two natures in the person of Christ. But *how* these are one, being not revealed, is neither the *object* of faith, nor the *subject* of human understanding. The support of faith is the authority and fidelity of God. Hence the scriptures are called *The faithful word*; Tit. i. 9. *The true sayings of God*; Rev. xix. 9. *And this is a faithful saying*, (to be depended upon as an established fact) *and worthy of all acceptance*, (being fully proved to be infinitely good as well as true) *that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners*; 1 Tim. i. 15. Faith therefore includes, not only an *assent* to gospel truths, but a persuasion of their infinite *worth* and transcendent *glory*; and personal interest therein, ariseth from the *evidence* of having *received the truth in the love of it*; for faith objectively considered, or as it respects the things believed by the christian, is a *compendium, or the substance* of things hoped for, as *published in the glorious gospel of the grace of*

God. Faith, subjectively considered, consisteth in the evidence of things not seen by the carnal mind or corporeal eye ; Heb. xi. 1 : which hidden realities, though concealed from the wise and prudent, are revealed unto babes ; Matt. xi. 25, and every one who really receives Christ Jesus the Lord, to them he gives power, or authority, to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. However weak their faith may be, they are possessed of that which is in its own nature an evidence that they are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God ; John i. 12, 13. But though every heaven-born soul is the subject of what evidences a relation to God, he has not always light enough to discern it. Besides, a view of his heart depravity engages his attention, and frequently fills him with fear that he is not passed from death unto life. For the sake of such I would endeavour.

Secondly, To remove some of those stumbling-blocks which are in the way, relating to the new birth. Some gracious people are greatly discouraged, because they cannot ascertain the time when they passed under such a change. They are persuaded of the truth, and are convinced of the propriety of the Lord's solemn asseveration, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again he cannot see, he cannot enter into the kingdom*

dom of God. But not knowing the time when they were born again, and perhaps through confused ideas of what is intended by the term, they are kept in a state of uncomfortable suspense, and their progress in vital religion is retarded, not knowing how to determine, or by what rule to judge whether they are or are not born again. To such persons I would propose the following consideration :

Do you know the exact time of your natural birth? None can answer they do from their own knowledge and memory, and though some cannot obtain certain information from any one on what day, or even in what year they were born; yet they do not doubt of the fact. As effects in natural things lead back to their respective causes, and are infallible proofs of their reality, so it is in spiritual affairs. In this manner we are taught in scripture to proceed in order to gain assurance respecting facts, which fall not under immediate personal observation. As saith the apostle, every house is builded by some man, as therefore every structure, from the princely palace to the meanest cottage, as incontestable proofs of human agency, so as saints are God's workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus, and habitations of God through *the Spirit*, the nature of the change produced in *them* claims Jehovah for its author; therefore as *the apostle* adds, he that buildeth all things is

God; Heb. iii. 4. The great inquiry should be, Whether we are the subjects of the heavenly birth or not, for as to the time when, it is an immaterial circumstance, any further than as related to the question, *How old art thou?* As it is not necessary to know the time of your natural birth, in order to prove your proper humanity; neither is the knowledge of your spiritual birth as to the time when, at all needful to evidence your true christianity, the change may be demonstrably evident, though the time when it first commenced be uncertain. To know whether a person is born again, it should be considered that the work of the Spirit of God upon the soul, whereby sinners are denominated new creatures, is set forth by figurative language. As there are new principles or dispositions produced it is called a creation. Created in Christ Jesus; Eph. ii. 10. As it bears a resemblance to procreation, it is therefore called a regeneration and a new birth. These terms are used for the purpose of illustrating its nature, the evident and plain import of which are to point out, that a person who is the subject of such a gracious change, feels and views himself to be in such circumstances in a spiritual sense, as resemble the natural condition of an infant; for such persons feel themselves feeble and forlorn, they are convinced of their utter inability to provide for the least of their numerous wants, or

even to describe them, like a new-born babe, they desire the sincere milk of the word which they relish, taste the sweetness of, and are nourished by. They are dependent entirely on the Lord's care and kindness, who loves them, deals tenderly with them, feeds them with what is convenient for them, as they are able to bear it, clothes them with the robe of righteousness, and garments of salvation. He teaches them gradually the things relating to the kingdom of grace into which they are brought, and of which they are naturally ignorant, for they shall be all taught of God from the least of them to the greatest of them; Isai. liv. 13. As they have a disposition for spiritual activity, so the Lord increases their strength, takes them by the hand, teaches them to go; Hos. xi. 3. As they grow in acquaintance with their heavenly Father, and the household of faith, they feel a love to God, a fear of him, have their dependence upon him, and are desirous of his presence, protection, and guidance. They love all the people of God, and those the best who as they think most resemble him. Those therefore who are thus dependent upon God, humble before him, having a relish for divine things, or, in a word, dispositions towards God of a filial nature, becoming a child to his father and family; *such have the evidences of being born again, they having been brought with godly aim-*

plidity to receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child, without which the Redeemer has declared no man can in any wise enter therein; Luke xviii. 17. Thus the feeble state and forlorn condition of the Jews when God first entered into covenant with them as a people, and they became his special property and care, is illustrated by an infant, Ezek. 16, in the most deplorable condition. So the spiritual experiences of his people, both sorrowful and sweet, are represented by the metaphor of a helpless infant, under the kind care of its loving, compassionate, and prudent parent. Again, such bear the likeness of their Father God; as by their first birth they partake of the image of the earthly, so by their second birth, they are made partakers of the heavenly; for that which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit, is spirit; John iii. 6. They that are born again love what God does, and hate what he abhors, which gradually increaseth as they grow in grace, or to maturity, as perfect men in Christ Jesus. A holy disposition is therefore an infallible proof of a heavenly descent, or that such are born again.

Thirdly, Several christians are discouraged on account of their not having been favoured with such strong consolation as others speak of, and some are stumbled because of the short duration of their joy, and in both the above cases perplexities arise about the real difference between

false and true pleasure attending religion. Such persons would do well to consider, that it is not the *height* of consolation, nor the *length* of its continuance, which proves it genuine, or of a true spiritual nature : some of the Galatian church, of whose gracious state the apostle was in doubt, spoke of great blessedness ; Gal. iv. 15. The Israelites sang God's praise with great delight at the Red Sea, but soon forgot his works and rebelled against his authority ; the stony ground hearers received the word with joy, but not having depth of root, therefore when tribulation came for the word's sake, their pleasure and profession died. Even Herod heard John with gladness, yet clave to his sins, and Ezekiel was a pleasant song to many of his hearers who took no delight in obedience to God. It is possible some may hold fast their self-deception and go down to hell with a lie in their right hand, rejoicing in a thing of nought ; for a hope of deliverance from punishment cannot fail giving pleasure to its possessors, and while the pleasing expectation is supported, the degree of consolation arising from a false hope may be equal, yea superior to what is produced by a good one. Such not knowing their own hearts and the infinite evil of sin, *are* therefore not plagued like other men ; Psal. *lxxiii.* 5, 14. We ought seriously to consider *from what* our comforts spring, and in what they

they terminate; in order to know, and judge of their true nature and kind: false comforts frequently arise from a partial view of God's salvation. An unsanctified soul will rejoice in the hope of a deliverance from the punishment of sin, simply from the principle of self-love. But mere safety does not satisfy the truly gracious, all such likewise want to have the *power* of sin subdued, and the *pollution* of sin removed; their habitual prayer to God is, *take away all iniquity* and receive us graciously; Hosea xiv. 1, 2. Pleasures therefore arising from a prospect of freedom from sorrow, may be where sin maintains a full dominion, *I shall have peace*, saith one, *though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst, thus he blesseth himself in his heart when he heareth Jehovah's tremendous curse.* How awful is Heaven's language to such a daring deluded sinner! *The Lord will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses written in this book shall lie upon him;* Deut. xxix. 19, 20. Again, false joy sometimes ariseth from the *manner* of relief being brought to the mind, but true pleasure springs from the *matter* applied, or the nature and suitableness of truth discovered, the *suddenness* of relief is only a circumstance in itself, and yet some seem to build their *hope of salvation* upon it, but those who infer such

impressions are all of God and absolutely safe, forget that satanical influences are compared to darts; on the other hand, some unmercifully censure every extraordinary relief as diabolical. But as times of dreadful temptations and overwhelming sorrows are periods which will not admit of delay, and when viewed in that light it is no wonder the soul with holy vehemence should cry, make haste, make no tarrying, oh my God; and, is it a wonder that God should hear prayer, or be found a present, yea a very present help in time of trouble? If not, why then should such appearances be opposed or doubted? The Lord flies on the wings of the wind for the help of Jeshurun, and may he not avenge his own elect who cry unto him day and night, and that speedily, though he may seem to bear long with them; for as he sendeth forth his commandment upon earth, his word runneth very swiftly? Yea, he says, before they call I will answer; and whilst they are yet speaking I will hear; Isaiah lxxv. 24. Daniel found this promise verified in his experience, for while he was speaking in prayer, Gabriel being caused to fly swiftly, touched him, and told him, that at the beginning of his supplication the commandment came forth; in obedience to which *he appeared in his favour*; Dan. ix. 21, 23. Those *therefore* are not to be censured or discouraged *who have found that ere they were aware, their*

souls were made like the chariots of Aminadib; providing their hope leads to holiness, and their peace and pleasure terminate in purity. Many christians have reason to admire the speedy manner in which the Lord has relieved them, when their prospects were dismal, and their souls with horror stood trembling on the brink of eternal woe; like a poor criminal at the fatal tree expecting every moment to launch into eternity, but who is happily prevented by the sudden arrival of a reprieve, or a pardon from his gracious sovereign. He admires and is thankful for the speed with which the joyful message came. Notwithstanding which he does not consider the manner of the messenger's arrival, but the tidings brought are the principal spring of his joy, and the only foundation of his present security. The posts which carried the cruel edict from the Persian court to destroy the Jews in every province, were hasted by the King's commandment, as well as those dispatched in their favour; therefore the Monarch's intention was not from thence discoverable. The speed with which a message is carried does not prove it to be of a favourable nature, nor does it so much as demonstrate *from* or to *whom* it is sent. Neither does the *manner* in which any portion of scripture is brought to *the mind* determine its being the language of God to that person in particular; the mere mode

impression is not essential to spiritual comfort, conviction, or instruction; yet many are encouraged or cast down more from the *manner* in which impressions are made on their minds, than from the matter expressed or the nature and tendency of truth contained in the scriptures. A genuine hope in God, or the enjoyment of pardon, is ever accompanied with self-diffidence; such as are so favoured, rejoice in Christ Jesus, *and put no confidence in the flesh*. Sacred pleasure is not only incomparably superior, but of a nature opposite to levity and carnal security; fervent love to God will be excited and promoted by it. I will, says David, love the Lord, because he hath heard my supplication; and of Mary it is said, she loved much because much was forgiven her. It invigorates repentance, *they shall look upon me whom they have pierced and mourn, yea shall be ashamed and confounded when I am pacified towards them, for all that they have done, saith the Lord*. It promotes humble, cheerful, and universal obedience; the language of such a soul is, What am I, or what was my father's house, that thou shouldest bring me hitherto? How is it, Lord, thou shouldest thus manifest thyself! What shall I render unto the Lord? I will run the *ways of thy commandments*.—Bless the Lord, *O my soul*. In regard to those who are distressed about the fluctuation of their enjoyments, it may

be a relief to their minds to consider that God *went up from Jacob in the place where he talked with him*; Gen. xxxv. 13. David's mountain stood strong, but when the Lord hid his face, he was troubled. Permanent joy is not to be expected in this world, but is reserved for the next. What God imparts now is designed to encourage and forward the christian in his duty, and so to profit rather than to please. Again, the shorter our present comforts are, the oftener should we apply to the God of all consolation for the renewal of them; saying with David, restore unto me the joys of thy salvation; and with the pensive prophet, O the hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, Why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a way-faring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night? Jer. xiv. 8. And the more watchful should we be lest we grieve the holy spirit the comforter; and cause him to withdraw his soul-cheering influences.

Fourthly, *A deep sense of internal depravity, or the prevalency of sin in the heart*, has often been very stumbling to serious christians, who on a view of their vileness have been ready to conclude their cases are both *singular and sad*; says the discouraged soul, If I be a christian, why am I *thus*?

It may be an advantage for such to reflect

that a soul-humbling sense of sin, and deep abasement before God, has been experienced by the most eminent saints recorded in scripture, as is evident from the language they have used on the subject of self-description, saying, Behold I am vile, I abhor myself. I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips. I blush to look up to heaven. I am as a beast before thee. Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. I am carnal, and sold under sin. I find a law in my members warring against that in my mind, leading me into captivity. Iniquities prevail against me. Evil is present with me. I cannot do the things that I would. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me? We are all as an unclean thing. These with many more instances which might be produced, demonstrate, that true believers, and they only, are properly acquainted with the plague of their own hearts. Why then should the christian be discouraged through feeling himself to be, what those who were eminent for godliness, have with shame and sorrow acknowledged they were? Besides, have you not repeatedly intreated the Lord to search and try *you*, to discover what was in your hearts? And *shall you now* be stumbled and discouraged *because he has heard and answered your prayers?*

And as God has given you an experience similar to what was once the case of those who are now the subjects of spotless purity, and perpetual praise; is it reasonable to conclude from thence you are not the subjects of a gracious change? You may rather infer, that if the Lord had been pleased to have slain you, he would not have shown you such things as these. Remember, the whole need not a physician, but those that are sick, and grace has made rich provision for healing all the diseases and maladies of the mind. Perhaps every good man will at least account himself of all others the most indebted to God and grace, for he feels that in himself which he does not certainly know is in any other, for every heart only knows its own bitterness. By such experiences the Lord is training his people for the future glory. For, accounting themselves as St. Paul did the chief of sinners, 1 Tim. i. 15. their own salvation will be the matter of eternal wonder, every one viewing his own deliverance as the effect of a peculiar exertion of divine power, and an uncommon display of rich superabounding grace; being each under infinite deficiency, respecting their personal endeavours to extol the great Jehovah. Mutual assistance will be intreated in the work of praise; for the language of the redeemed of the Lord to fellow saints frequently is, O magnify the Lord with

me, and let us exalt his name together; Psalm xxxiv. 3. Go on then, ye blessed of the Lord, pressing after the full possession of that salvation which you see the absolute need of, even a complete deliverance from sin, as well as from sorrow; that grace which has rendered sin loathsome, and Christ lovely in your view, is sufficient for you. In a perpetual dependence on which, may you hold on your way with courage and caution, till you arrive at Zion's celestial gate! Then shall you obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away, Isaiah xxxv. 10. On dismissing the above, behold,

Fifthly, Another class of christians present themselves to view, whose progress is retarded by a false and discouraging representation of the distinguishing doctrines of grace: which are frequently asserted to be inimical to experimental religion, and of such a nature as to supersede personal holiness, and render internal conformity to God unnecessary. Whatever God has revealed in his word, we may be sure is worthy of himself, and advantageous to his people. We ought diligently to inquire what Jehovah has revealed as matter of faith and obedience, and whatever is of a divine original demands our reverent attention, cordial reception, and cheerful *obedience*. It is the height of arrogance in a *puny mortal* to dispute with his Maker about the

propriety of what he does or says. O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Rom. ix. 20. However, for the relief of such serious minds as are perplexed and stumbled in consequence of the aforesaid objections, let us briefly consider those doctrines which are generally supposed the most exceptionable in relation to christian experience.

First, The doctrine of imputation. This is not liable to the aforesaid objection, for the placing of the Redeemer's righteousness to the account of his people, does not supersede the work of the Spirit of God in the soul, nor render unnecessary holiness of heart, or the exercise of spiritual graces. Imputation is not a transfusion. It makes no alteration in the internal disposition. If it did, our sins being imputed to Christ would have tainted his holy mind. But though sin was placed to his account, the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all. He was made sin for us, that he might legally suffer in our stead according to law; yet he was still the holy one who knew no sin as a principle in him. So Christ's righteousness is *upon and towards those who believe*, Rom. iii. 22, by which they are freed from condemnation, but are not thereby made inwardly pure; the righteousness of Christ is not *infused as a holy principle in them, but put upon them as an heavenly robe.* Now though

righteousness delivers from death, and entitles to life, yet an internal disposition suited to the nature of heavenly felicity is absolutely necessary, therefore there is need of a life of grace here, in order to a life of glory hereafter; and indeed they differ only in degree, not in nature and kind. Hence Jesus says, I give unto my sheep eternal life, John x. 28. This is life eternal that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent; John xvii. 3. Men need a righteousness *imparted*, as well as a righteousness *imputed*, the inner man of the heart is therefore created anew in righteousness and true holiness, in order to the enjoyment of true happiness. Being guilty there was a necessity of Christ's fulfilling the law for us, but when perfect in holiness, the righteousness of the law will be fulfilled *in* us. By the former we escape eternal misery. By the latter we have a taste for, and are rendered capable of enjoying heavenly felicity; therefore we ought to be as much concerned to possess a *meetness* for heaven as a *right* to it. But a capacity to enjoy, does not give a title to enjoyment, in reference to the things of nature, nor does it give a right to the blessings of grace. A man while sick, cannot enjoy the most pleasing inheritance. Yet no *man in his right mind* ever thought the best state *of health*, or the firmest constitution, could give

a title to an estate. So the believer's claim, or entitling righteousness to future glory, does not depend upon, nor rise out of his own personal qualifications, though there is a necessity of perfect holiness, in order to complete happiness. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord, Isaiah xliv. 17. In answer to the solemn question, Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place? It is said, he that hath clean hands, and a pure heart, even he shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness FROM the God of his salvation; Psalm xxiv. 4, 5. The believer therefore longs for purity, but after all his religious attainments resolves to go through life, down to death, and home to glory in the strength of the Lord God, making mention of his righteousness, and of his only; Psalm lxxi. 16. Again,

Secondly, Some are ready to object against the efficacious nature of divine grace in conversion, and say that constraining grace cannot be consistent with the natural freedom of the human will. For if I freely choose the things of God, how is my choice owing to divine grace? And if I be impelled by the power of grace, how am I free in my choice? Answer, By a proper attention to our experience of mental acts, whether *as creatures or christians*, it will be found that

choosing is giving a preference, or is a preferring some persons or things above others. The preference given, or choice made, is the effect of their appearing to us more agreeable, or having an ascendancy in our esteem. However precious or excellent any thing be in itself, yet if that excellency or worth be not discovered, it does not become the object of choice.

Things are therefore chosen or refused, esteemed or disesteemed, according as they appear the understanding, or are presented to the mind's view, as agreeable or disagreeable. Now as the natural man cannot know the things of the Spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned, therefore he does not choose them. As *facts* they are knowable to such; but their divine beauty and spiritual excellency lie concealed from the carnal mind, therefore natural things are freely chosen or preferred to spiritual, being more agreeable to the mind in its unrenewed state. But when omnipotent grace begets new principles in the soul, changes the heart and opens the understanding to behold things as they really are, then the world and all temporary good sinks into nothing and vanity, when compared with Christ and the blessings of the gospel. Now the will which before freely chose *sinful delights*, as freely chooseth the one thing *needful*. Christ, in whom sinners saw no form

nor comeliness, wherefore they should desire him; is now in their esteem the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. Now they freely choose such things for their portion, and such persons for their associates, as before they had an utter aversion to. Now they as freely choose the paths of virtue and religion, as before they did those of vice and sensuality. If there be such an alteration experienced, need I ask such a happy soul, who made thee to differ? 1 Cor. iv. 7. Surely such will be free to acknowledge with the apostle, By the grace of God I am what I am, 1 Cor. xv. 10. If so, you cannot consistently object.

Thirdly, To the doctrine of election, for it looks upon you with a friendly aspect, and by it you are informed, that grace was treasured up for you in Christ Jesus before the world began; and if God has now given grace to you, (the certain pledge of glory) it surely will not be offensive to be informed, he intended to do so, and that he had it in reserve for you before he bestowed it upon you. You will not, you cannot complain of his having loved you too soon, or made gracious provision for you too early. No, you will admire and adore the free and distinguishing grace of the Father who chose you in particular, from everlasting, set you apart for himself, and preserved you in Christ Jesus, and by

his spirit called you with an high calling, and is now fitting you for, and leading you to the full enjoyment of salvation with eternal glory, 1 Tim. ii. 10. Put on therefore (as the elect of God, holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, which you are under the strongest obligations to discover to your fellow christians and fellow creatures. Ever remember that those who are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, should shew forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light, 1 Pet. ii. 9.

This doctrine is not discouraging in its own nature, (however it may be represented) to any sincere seeking sinner. Such are not called to produce evidences of their election, in order to warrant their application to Jesus for salvation. No, my dear friends, your present concern is how to have guilt and pollution removed, that you may stand accepted before Jehovah's bar. To you there is a fountain opened, the blood of Jesus which cleanseth from all sin. Your desire of coming to Christ under a sense of the absolute need you are in of a Saviour, is a hopeful sign that you shall know, if you follow on to know the *Lord*. None but the chosen of God do ever *heartily* choose religion as the one thing needful, *and the language of the compassionate Saviour*

is, all that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out, John vi. 37. Therefore such who long, and wait for the salvation of God, through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth as it is in Jesus; whose hearts' desire is to be found in Christ, and without blame before him in love, will never meet with a disappointment, for he who cannot lie hath said, he will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer; Psalm cii. 17. He satisfieth the longing soul, even such who (for the present) sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; Psalm cvii. 9, 10. Cordially to embrace Christ and deliberately to take up his cross and follow him, are the genuine effects of electing love. To every such soul the language of the Lord is, yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee; Jer. xxxi. 3. I will rest in my love, I will rejoice over thee with singing, Zeph. iii. 17. You who love the Lord, and desire to be entirely and eternally devoted to him, you know and are sure you were not naturally so disposed; and if so, that new covenant promise made to Immanuel has been fulfilled in your favour, thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, Psalm cx. 3. He sent his word unto Jacob, and it lighted upon him.

You happy souls who are conscious of having chosen and elected the Lord as your God, need not perplex yourselves about his choice of you as his people. But know that the Lord has set apart him that is godly for himself; Psalm iv. 3. Therefore, blessed is the man whom the Lord hath chosen, and caused to approach unto him; Psalm lxxv. 4. For the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his; 2 Tim. ii. 19. This doctrine is a source of strong consolation to them who have fled for refuge to Christ, the hope set before them; Heb. vi. 17, 18. For in the midst of all the perplexing difficulties and trying occurrences in this fluctuating world, such may triumph in the hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised them in Christ Jesus before the world began; Tit. i. 2. For yet a little while, and he that hath said he shall come, will come and will not tarry; then shall they meet with an hearty welcome into the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

Fourthly, If discouragements be removed respecting the doctrine of election, it is not probable that redemption will be viewed in a light unfavourable to weak christians. Every truth *relating to the law of God or the gospel of grace, if properly stated, will be disgusting to the carnal and unsanctified mind.* But those who are chris-

tians indeed, though they may be ignorant of, or even prepossessed with prejudice against, the terms by which truths are distinguished, yet the nature of truth is not with them an object of aversion ; as personal election is not prejudicial to such, it cannot be thought redemption should be so.

For the election and redemption of men are inseparably connected in scripture as distinct links in the grand chain of gospel truth ; the personal objects, and end, are the same in each, and Christ's claim to his people is founded on both ; thine they were, and thou gavest them me. I pray not for the world but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine, and all mine are thine, and thine are mine ; John xvii. 6, 9, 10. As they were given to him so they were purchased by him, they were committed to his care as sheep to a shepherd, and he laid down his life for them ; John x. 15. The flock of God he purchased with his own blood ; Acts xx. 28, called the precious blood of Christ as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot ; 1 Pet. i. 18: They were given him out of the world, John xvii. 6. And he redeemed them from among men ; Rev. xiv. 4. Out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation ; Rev. iv. 9. When God chose his people he foreknew that *man would fall, and the whole human race would*

lose their purity and become transgressors from the womb; Isaiah xlviii. 8. He therefore chose them to complete salvation and absolute purity, that they might be without blame before him in love; Eph. i. 4. Christ, in whom they were chosen and to whose care they were committed, being constituted the head of the church, he became the saviour of the body, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish; Eph. v. 23, 25, 26, 27. Powerful operations of grace in and upon the church and chosen of God, by which they are purified and made meet for heaven, are necessarily connected with the redemption which Jesus obtained for them by his precious blood. Divine justice was satisfied with the stipulated price, and infinite power secures the purchased possession; such a redemption is suitable to christians of every rank, and discouraging to none, if its nature be known properly, or what is included in it be duly considered.

Those who come to Christ consider themselves as criminals justly condemned, and therefore in *absolute need* of a pardon. God be merciful to *me a sinner*, is the language of each, and where *should such look for relief* but to the Saviour,

in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace? Eph. i. 7. Gracious souls are conscious of having grievously departed from God. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; Isaiah liii. 6, and have trespassed against our God. But Jesus to whom the flock belonged has made satisfaction for the damage sustained; for the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. His people know they have trespassed and are unable to make a recompence, for being poor they have nothing to give unto him against whom they have trespassed, Numb. iv. 8. But in this doctrine Jesus is represented as the kind and compassionate kinsman who engaged, that for the trespass of his people a recompence should be made unto the Lord. He was therefore wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, and redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; Gal. iii. 13. Do they consider themselves afar off from God, and desire to be a people near unto the Lord? How cheering to such the doctrine of redemption! Wherefore remember ye, saith Paul to the saints in his day, that ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, having no hope and without God in the world; but now in Christ

Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ; Eph. ii. 12, 13. For Christ suffered for sins the just for the unjust, (not that he might only open or put us into a way in which we might possibly attain to glory) but that he might bring us to God; 1 Peter iii. 18. In this the saints triumph in Heaven, and of this they sing, saying, thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood; Rev. v. 9. Cheer up, ye discouraged souls, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption, and he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities; Psalm cxxx. 7, 8.

Consider the Redeemer's priesthood and power are unchangeable. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them; Heb. vii. 24, 25. You who are now the servants of God, were once slaves to Satan and sin, serving divers lusts and pleasures; wherefore the great deliverance and happy change are entirely owing to the efficacy of redemption.

How thankful ought we to be who are made free from such an awful state of bondage, for as much as ye know that ye were not redeemed *with corruptible things as silver and gold, from*

your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ; 1 Pet. i. 18.

That peculiar and particular redemption of which Christ is the author, cannot justly be deemed discouraging to any who are sensible of their misery and long for deliverance, because those who are declared in scripture to be personally interested in this special blessing, are described by such qualities of mind and exercises of soul, many of which the weakest christian knows and feels himself to be the subject of; such as a conscious sense of spiritual captivity, debt, and danger, joined with an approbation of Jesus, and desires after those blessings which result from his merits and meditation.

May saints rejoice in, and sinners seek after this great redemption, which consisteth in a deliverance from the curse of the law, Gal. iii. 13, from all iniquity, Tit. ii. 14, from the tyranny of Satan, (1 John iii. 8, Isaiah xlix. 25,) the spirit of bondage, Heb. i. 15, the sting of death, the ruins of mortality, (Hosea xiii. 14,) and from wrath to come, (1 Thes. i. 10.) From these few considerations the certain salvation of all the redeemed of the Lord may be safely inferred, for the redemption is not only copious but durable, *all its blessings are stamped with eternity, for Jesus has obtained eternal redemption for us;*

Heb. ix. 12. Therefore of the way of holiness it is asserted by the lip of truth, that the redeemed of the Lord shall walk there, and the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away; Isaiah xxxv. 9. 10. Once more,

The doctrine of final perseverance can scarce be thought discouraging to the saints, and none but such ought to be encouraged to hope they shall be saved. Those who are entered upon a journey, and are very desirous of a safe arrival, will not count it a disadvantage to have a faithful and infallible guide, who will watch over them night and day and never leave them, but conduct them through every difficulty they may meet with. Is it reasonable to suppose they will be discouraged to hear that every thing is previously prepared by a kind friend that went on purpose, as their forerunner, for their accommodation while on the road, and their joyful entrance and welcome reception to those mansions where they wish to dwell for ever?

Would it sink the courage of a soldier, or cause him to enter the field of battle with reluctance, because he is given to understand, that no one *who draws the sword in favour of his sovereign shall be slain*, but shall assuredly gain a glorious *victory and return with songs of triumph to the*

grand metropolis, the seat of royalty, and there in the midst of millions of joyful spectators receive every mark of honour and approbation which can be desired from the King?

Would the loving spouse, who is at a vast and dangerous distance from her royal husband, be distressed, because he has concerted measures for her honourable arrival at his palace, and sent both his chariot and his guards to conduct her home, with a message, assuring her he cannot be satisfied without her presence, and to see her a partner with him on his throne?

If the above cannot be supposed, how then can christians be cast down by that which insures their final salvation, and the fulfilment of all their vast desires? The doctrine, if properly understood, cannot be deemed in its own nature disadvantageous to any man, though it be frequently abused as every other part of revelation is, and likewise its divine author. It does not encourage sloth, or suppose the exercise of grace unnecessary, and caution needless. No, it is through faith and patience they inherit the promises. The intention and design of the great and precious promises are to encourage a close adherence to Christ, and a continuation in well doing, as connected with eternal life. And it is a stimulating motive not to be idle, when they *know their labour shall not be in vain in the*

Lord ; 1 Cor. xv. 58. To know that the doctrine is a fact, I need only say, Search the scriptures which testify of Christ's near relation to them ; the strength of his love towards them ; the infinite price he gave for them ; the change he has wrought in them, and the declaration he has made concerning them, that where he is they shall be, and because he lives they shall live also.

Sixthly, Many christians have been, and are stumbled and much discouraged because of God's providences appearing in various instances, contrary to his promises. To consider them as real opposites, the good man knows would be daring infidelity. But not being able to reconcile them as relating to himself, he therefore is ready to conclude, that as providences are gloomy and appear against him, he has no right to interpret the promises of God in his favour. It may be a relief to such to observe,

First, Jehovah's proceedings are extremely mysterious. *His ways are in the deep waters, and his footsteps are not known.* As the governor of the world, *Clouds and darkness are round about him,* the most penetrating creature cannot pry into his deep and vast designs. To impeach his conduct is the greatest insolence, to prescribe to him rules of propriety, is horrid presumption. *We ought to be still and know that he is God, and does all things well ; therefore as relating to*

his will and operations, we may truly say, *whatever is, is best*. The history of Joseph is a striking proof of the mystery of providence; the Lord's kindness to him at last appeared, notwithstanding all the awful consequences attending his brethrens' cruelty; through ignominy he was brought to honour, through slavery to liberty and authority; yea by means of an irksome prison he was advanced to the splendour of a palace; therefore let discouraged christians wait with patience, till they see in what their trials may terminate; wherein a decision is difficult and dangerous, a suspension of judgment is prudent and safe, therefore judge nothing before the time.

Secondly, Consider, good and great men have frequently been mistaken when they have ventured to pass judgment on the proceedings of God. David thought he should one day die by the hand of Saul. Providence wore for a time such a gloomy aspect that he concluded the prophecies and promises respecting him would never be accomplished, and that the messengers of God were liars. Jacob, in a trying period, said of divine dispensations, all these things are against me. And yet those very providences brought him into such a state of honour, comfort and tranquillity, as he never before enjoyed. This is further evident from good Asaph's query, *Will the Lord cast off for ever, will he be favourable*

no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in his anger shut up his tender mercies, Selah, Psalm lxxvii. 7, 9. And so awful and intricate were the divine proceedings towards holy Job, that he appeared to his friends as a singular object of God's displeasure. Yea, he himself verily thought the Lord counted him as an enemy, and treated him as such.

You who think there is no sorrow like unto your sorrow, attend to the lamentation of that holy man of God, which he uttered in the anguish of his spirit, and the complaint which he made in the bitterness of his soul, recorded in chap. vii. from verse 3. chap. xiii. 24, 27. chap. xvi. and chap. xix. 6, 21; and yet before the commencement of his trials, and after their accomplishment, Jehovah declares him to have been not only truly religious, but the most eminent of all his servants then on the earth; and Jeremiah, who with remarkable courage pleaded on heaven's behalf against a revolted, God provoking nation, though he had sweet intercourse with the most high, yet through a complication of difficulties and trying dispensations, he said, Surely against me is he turned, Lam. iii. 3. Such *discouragements* have not only attended some *few individuals* who have been called to bear

the burden and heat of the day, but have accompanied the people of God in general, while in this vale of tears; for Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me; Isaiah xlix. 14. The above and many more instances of the like kind, are left on sacred record not for our imitation but admonition; these mournful proofs of human weakness may serve to convince us of our incapacity to discover in dark dispensations the harmony and connection, between the kindness of God's heart, and the operations of his hand; likewise of the necessity of walking by faith, and not by sight. Those therefore who are in darkness and have no light, are graciously invited and kindly encouraged to trust in the name of the Lord, and stay themselves upon their God; Isaiah li. 10. You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy. May the discouraged christian then come to the same resolution, which that eminent man of God did, saying, *Though he slay me, yet I will trust in him*; Job. xiii. 15. Consider,

Thirdly, That by such trying providences the Lord discovers to his people what is in their hearts. See Deut. viii. 2, by which their humility and repentance are promoted, and their dependence on God increased, they are thereby

put upon self-examination, in order to know why the Lord contendeth with them, each one therefore with solemn seriousness, is brought to interrogate conscience, *saying*, What have I done? And seeing the absolute necessity of direction, support and pardon, they become more frequent and fervent in prayer. Like Jacob they retire from the world to wrestle with God, and being encouraged by his precious promises, are therefore resolved not to let him go, without a blessing; therefore they cry unto him day and night, Luke xviii. praying without ceasing. And many kind interpositions of providence are recorded in scripture, and are still experienced by his people, who have by adverse dispensations been stirred up to seek the Lord with their whole hearts. When Jacob wept, and made supplication to his God, the terrible prospect of his brother's approaching him at the head of a furious army, breathing vengeance, was changed into a melting scene of tender friendship and affection. Esau's dreadful designs were at once dismissed, and instead of killing he salutes his brother with kisses of kindness, and generously offers his service for his future protection.

Thus providences are in fact designed to fulfil the promises of God in a way which prepares the minds of his people for the reception of the favour he intends to confer, so that God's wisdom,

as well as his goodness, power, and veracity, becomes the object of admiration; for thereby the Lord makes crooked things straight, and rough places plain, humbles and yet helps, discovers the corruption of the human heart; and thus from a sense of meanness and misery, difficulty and danger, deliverances appear more conspicuously the effects of wonderful grace.

Thus God trieth the righteous by a suspension of promised mercies, which delays are often interpreted as denials, through the prevalency of unbelief. But let tried christians consider the conduct of providence towards the heirs of promise as recorded in scripture, in order to the support of hope, and a patient waiting for Christ. Abraham was kept waiting five and twenty years, and then with joy embraced the promised son. Again, consider, promised mercies frequently are mistaken in their first appearance, through their being viewed by the eye of sense and reason, as clothed with the garb of misery. The choicest mercies have commonly come in disguise; therefore who can by present appearances know what is good for a man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? Eccles. vi. 12. However it is evident from an impartial survey of Jehovah's conduct, that the methods *he takes to accomplish his own gracious designs and his peoples holy desires, are all worthy of*

himself, though frequently the very reverse to the plans of finite wisdom, as remarkably evidenced in his dealings with Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Daniel, and many others whose religious characters shine as stars of the first magnitude in the horizon of grace.

Fourthly, Another spring of perplexity arising in the minds of many, respecting the providences of God, is mistaken views of the nature of divine promises. Spiritual blessings promised in the scriptures are frequently construed as including certain degrees of temporal felicity. Such an interpretation prevailed among the disciples of Christ, and being disappointed in their hopes of such enjoyments, therefore *sorrow filled their hearts*, the expectation of earthly dignity, and worldly splendour beclouded their minds, and darkened their understanding respecting the spiritual glories of Christ, the nature of his kingdom and designs of his death. Though there was an inconsistency and real contrariety in nature, between the *proceedings* of God, and his *promises*, as interpreted by them, yet afterwards, when favoured with a clearer understanding of the scriptures, they saw a happy harmony, and an inseparable connection between them, and rejoiced *in the accomplishment* of the promises of God, *which were all found yea, and amen in Christ Jesus*. To prevent the like mistake among be-

lievers in future, the apostle to the Hebrews points out the various trying providences attending the worthies of old; who wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, but through faith and patience are now inheriting the promises. Therefore having nothing of this world is not inconsistent with inheriting all things which relate to the world to come. The Lord has promised to provide for his peoples' real wants in this life. He hath said, thy bread shall be given, and thy water shall be sure; your heavenly father knoweth you have need of these things. He careth for you, but he hath not described the quality, or quantity of earthly good, with which you shall be fed. Poverty, yea extreme poverty, has been the lot of many who were evidently the heirs of glory. The churches of Christ in Macedonia were in deep poverty. Yet many of the children of God were poorer than they, to whose relief the said churches contributed, even beyond their power, of which the apostle Paul, who was a witness, bears record, 2 Cor. viii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. And unto the church in Smyrna write these things, saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive, I know thy works and tribulation and poverty, but thou art rich, Rev. ii. 8, 9.

*Hearken, my beloved brethren, (saith a com-
passionate follower of Jesus) hath not God chosen*

the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him; James ii. 5. The same inspired writer even supposes a brother or sister to be naked, and destitute of daily food, ver. 15. Such have therefore been spoken of by the appellation of *poor saints*, Rom. xv. 26. A distressed saint may lie at the door of a rich sinner without receiving a crumb of relief, and appear as if forsaken by God and man. But oh, how great the change! How vast the difference in eternity! He who seemed as if neglected by heaven and earth, ascends at death to glory, and to Abraham's bosom. While the sumptuous living sinner sinks down to hell; and being in torment, asks in vain for a drop of water to cool his scorched tongue. But of Lazarus it is said with an air of sacred pleasure, *Now he is comforted*. Again,

Fifthly, Some have great discouragements and perplexity, arising from the failure of what they have considered as special and direct promises made to them in particular; as relating to the path of duty, or the enjoyment of some future good. The persuasion of promises being made to them in particular, arose perhaps from some portion of scripture being impressed on their *mind*, the terms and language of which were *exactly suitable* to what they had been seeking the *Lord* about, and therefore deemed expressive of

his mind in that particular ; the failure therefore of these, discourages their hope respecting the fulfilment of *those* which relate to their eternal salvation. For the relief of such I would observe, that though it is not denied but in some special cases, the Lord may have favoured some of his people with intimations of his mind in the manner aforesaid ; nevertheless there is commonly danger and disappointment attending such a construction of scripture in ordinary affairs, for we need no new revelation to point out the path of duty, the scriptures being sufficient for such a purpose, and a more sure word of prophecy than any thing referred to above. A criminal curiosity to pry into, or sinful anxiety to know future events, the Lord in mercy may convince his people of by disappointments. The design of the promises of God are to encourage faith and hope in the Lord, that he will provide what he sees necessary for, and give what is good to those who fear him ; but not to make a previous discovery in what *manner* he will support and supply. Even Moses the man of God seems to have been mistaken in regard to the time when, and the means by which, the Lord intended to accomplish the deliverance of his people from the bondage of Egypt ; for, when he defended the injured Israelite, and avenged him that was oppressed, he *supposed his brethren would have understood,*

how that God by his hand would have delivered them ; but they understood not, Acts vii. 25. And instead of his being then embraced as a deliverer, he was informed against and banished as a delinquent. He continued in a state of exile for forty years, and afterwards when the Lord sent him from Midian to Pharaoh, to demand in his name Israel's release, instead of deliverance, their bondage was increased, and his conduct they severely censured, on which account he returned unto the Lord, and said, Lord, Wherefore hast thou so evil intreated this people ? Why is it, that thou hast sent me ? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people ; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all, Exod. v. 21—23. And when providences turned up contrary to what Jeremiah expected, he in the bitterness of his soul uttered these awful words, *O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived*, Jer. xx. 7. From the above instances, it is evident that persons may be in some cases disappointed in their most sanguine expectations, in regard to the dispensations of God in this life, and yet the foundation of their hope remain unshaken in reference to eternal salvation. May christians be cautious and not use the word of the Lord in such a manner, and for *such purposes*, as were never intended. To interpret the designs of God, from detached sen-

tences, either impressed on the mind, or as first presented to the eye, on opening the sacred volume, is very injudicious, and has an entangling tendency ; therefore, as the apostle says, We do not cease to pray for you, and to desire, *that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding* ; Col. i. 9. In order to which may you be enabled to compare spiritual things with spiritual ; 1 Cor. ii. 13. Col. iii. 16. That *the word of Christ may dwell in you in all wisdom.*

May we all consider that the mistakes of eminent saints are recorded, not for our imitation, but our admonition, and to prevent overwhelming despondency on viewing our own mistakes, and to show the necessity of a strict careful examination of ourselves, fervent application to God, an humble dependance on him, connected with cheerful obedience to him, and a patient waiting for him. For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning ; that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope ; Rom. xv. 4.

I proceed to consider,

III. Some of the stumbling-blocks found in the way of

PRACTICAL RELIGION.

First, the disposition and conduct of some professors of religion is very stumbling to serious

inquirers after the way in which they should walk. A proud censorious spirit, condemning the weak as worthless, and treating inferiors with an air of contempt, is very trying and discouraging. But who hath despised the day of small things? God does not, therefore men ought not; and it is certain a humble christian cannot. Let the weak and discouraged christian contemplate the compassionate Saviour: Who will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. The lambs he will lay in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young, and to them who have no might he will increase strength; the strongest believer was once a babe in Christ; the tallest cedar once was not superior to the lowest shrub; and the stoutest oak was once in as tender a state as a feeble straw. How unreasonable then to despise the weak, seeing those who have arrived to the highest eminence in religion, in whatever sense they may be said to be great, yet their beginnings were but small. Those therefore who are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please themselves. Support the weak, is the Lord's express command. Hence says the apostle, let us not therefore judge one another any more, but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall in his brother's way; Rom. xiv. 13.

Secondly, Loose professors are extremely per-

nicious, of such the apostle spake with weeping, and pronounced them enemies to the cross of Christ. By them saints are discouraged and sinners hardened ; through them the good ways of God are evil spoken of and religion reproached, the righteous traduced, and the name of the Lord blasphemed. When professors fall into sin, the cry of the profane is, *This is their religion*. But the established christian with sighing says ; no, such miscarriages are owing to its absence. But weak believers are not only grieved but silenced and confounded, and when those who are eminent for God are overcome by the deceitfulness of sin, or the violence of temptation, christians in general are alarmed, as when a standard-bearer fainteth, and some are thereby for a time so discouraged, that they dare not profess religion, fearing they should likewise act an unbecoming part, and deeper wound its reputation. Thus they linger, though they love, not daring to proceed for fear of falling. Others, to avoid being sharers in reproach, sigh and go backwards into a state of pretended neutrality. Again, some notorious transgressors, termed *sinners in Zion*, when reproved for their sins and admonished according to Christ's direction given in the scriptures, and especially such as are excluded from church communion on account of their abominations, will from a spirit of revenge, join affinity with the

world, and satan like, turn accusers of the brethren with whom they were connected, and of whom they will speak all manner of evil. Such impenitent apostates, stooping to the low office of cooks in the devil's kitchen, will frequently dress up the imperfections of professors of religion, so as to gratify the taste of the ungodly, to whom the sins of the saints afford high entertainment, and on which the profane frequently feast with sweet satisfaction, as saith the Lord; *they eat up the sin of my people and they set their heart on their iniquity*; Hos. iv. 8, 9. In consequence of which those who sigh for the abounding abominations of the land, and are active for God in Zion, become the derision of fools, and the song of the drunkards; on which account they frequently adopt David's lamentation, who on the like occasion said; woe is me that I sojourn in Meseck, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar; Psalm cxx. 5.

Such things it is confessed are very trying, but shall religion be deserted because it is dishonoured? No, God forbid, the Lord's cause is good and honourable. Christ and religion are no worse for being betrayed, denied, or misused; shall the rebellion of some be urged in favour of disloyalty to our heavenly sovereign? Ought we *to be inactive* because others are indolent? Or *resolve not to be true*, because they are treacherous?

When Christ was deserted by various pretended friends, he addressed his few remaining followers thus : *Will ye also go away?* To which Peter replied in the name of the rest ; *Lord, to whom should we go but unto thee ; thou hast the words of eternal life.* May every lover of Jesus be in like manner resolved to adhere to him ! How rational the resolution ! How becoming the determination in every point of view ! For Jesus is possessed of every thing relating to eternal life, he and he only can satisfy and save the immortal soul. Is sin dreaded as aforesaid ? Let such consider which is the most likely method to be kept from its prevalency ? Surely they whose daily cry is, *Hold me up and then I shall be safe,* cannot with calmness conclude, that those are most likely to be heard of God and kept from sin, who disregard his authority, and live in the neglect of duty. A prevailing sense of weakness is no indication of danger ; no, pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. The christian ought to consider, the fewer they are that engage heartily in the cause of real religion, and the greater the opposition made to it, the more is his assistance needed. May such resolve to go *in the strength of the Lord God, making mention of his righteousness and of his only.* Though you proceed with trembling steps, the Lord can make you say and sing, with holy triumph, T

bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girt with strength. The God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people, blessed be God ; 1 Sam. ii. 4, Psalm lxviii. 35. Those who continue cool spectators, caring for none of these things, would do well to consider that the Lord allows of no neutrality in the important and perpetual contest between the kingdom of Heaven and that of hell, but says, *he that is not for us is against us*. He abhors a state of indifference in matters of religion. I would, says he, thou wert cold or hot ; so then because thou art luke-warm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth ; Rev. iii. 15, 16. How alarming the language in Deborah's song respecting those of the aforesaid disposition and conduct. Curse ye Meroz (said the angel of the Lord) curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty ; Judges v. 23. May the supine christian hear and fear !

Thirdly, Some are stumbled on account of the cross, or the reproach and persecution attending religion. A prospect of suffering in their persons, property, or character, is grievous to nature, and trying to grace. In regard to reproaches *from men*, we may observe, those who do not deserve them, need not dread them. If ye be *reproached for the name of Christ*, happy are ye,

for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you, on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified; 1 Pet. iv. 14. Cruel mockings, reproaches, and persecutions; Heb. xi. 36, 38, have been the lot of the righteous in every age, who are generally called to endure a great fight of afflictions as soon as they are illuminated, partly whilst they are made a gazing-stock, both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly whilst they become companions of them who are so used; Heb. x. 33. If any man will live godly in Christ Jesus he must suffer persecution, for as of old, he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now; Gal. iv. 29. But although such treatment is very trying, yet consider how much more dreadful are the frowns of God, and the stings of conscience. Jehovah's smiles well compensate for, and infinitely outweigh the revilings of men, or the rage of the devil; yet a little while and the wicked shall cease from troubling and the weary shall be at rest. Hearken unto me (saith the Lord) ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law. Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings, for the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool; but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation; Isaiah lviii. 7, 8. Attend, O discouraged christian, to

the Saviour's cheering language. He says, Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice and leap for joy; for behold your reward is great in heaven; Luke vi. 22. Accordingly we find the apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name's sake; therefore (says Paul) I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in distresses for Christ's sake, for when I am weak then am I strong; 2 Cor. xii. 10. Wherefore let no man's heart fail him because of these things, nor be discouraged because of the way; the Lord is able to make you rejoice in tribulation, through which you must enter the kingdom, and at last will crown your conflicts with victory and turn your pensive sighs into perpetual songs; keep in view the blessed Jesus as your pattern, who when he was reviled reviled not again; return not railing for railings, but pity and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you, saying, father forgive them, for they know not what they do; take care you are neither ashamed of religion, nor a shame to it; therefore in all things be ye circumspect, consider him that endured such contradiction of *sinner*s against himself, lest ye be wearied and *faint in your minds*. As he through the hope set

before him endured the cross, and despised the shame; Heb. xii. therefore arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; 1 Pet. iv. 1, and having put on the whole armour of God, stand fast in the faith, quit yourselves like men, be strong in the name of the Lord, lift up your banners and fight the good fight of faith. The heroic Paul, when he reconnoitred the host of inveterate foes, and viewed surrounding difficulties, and approaching dangers, said, *None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy*; and when methods of prudence were proposed by his weeping friends, to avoid impending danger, he, considering the advice inconsistent with christian duty and dignity, replied with warmth and holy vehemence; What mean ye to weep, and break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus; Acts xx. 24, xxi. 13; 2 Cor. iv. 17. His heavy trials which continued through life, he considered as light and short, when compared with the durable delights in a future world, *even a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*. Then those who have faithfully followed the Lord through difficulties, dangers and death, will meet with peculiar approbation and distinguished honours, then the captain of our salvation shall *recount his worthies*; Nahum ii. 5; Rev. vii. 14;

who will appear with the ensigns of victory, and the trophies of triumph in the new Jerusalem, of whom the applauding inhabitants will with joy sing, *these are they which came out of great tribulation*. Then the trial of your faith will be found more precious than gold which perisheth. The believing Hebrews therefore took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in heaven they had a more enduring substance; and Moses chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of reward; James v. 11. Behold we count them happy who endure, for in due time ye shall reap if ye faint not; therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord; 1 Cor. xv. 58.

Fourthly, Some are prevented attending to practical religion, by being told believers are not in any sense under the law. First by the law we are frequently to understand the covenant of works, or that compact and agreement which a God of kindness and condescension made with Adam, as the public head and representative of his offspring. Adam was under a natural and *necessary* obligation to obey his Maker's will, *and was absolutely dependant on God's sovereign*

pleasure for the continuance of his happy existence. A right to everlasting life, he could never have procured by his most ardent affection and strict obedience to God and his law; the Lord therefore kindly connected the promise of life with man's natural duty, and threatened death in case of failure. Thus Adam's motives to obedience were increased, being made a trustee for his numerous descendants. In that covenant a small and easy test of his subjection to God was fixed upon. Nothing more than a prohibition of one tree, while the vast and various productions in the garden of God, were liberally granted for his pleasure and profit. In the midst of which likewise flourished that which was an emblem and pledge of the promised blessing, called *The Tree of Life*, which would serve to confirm his faith in his covenant God, and invigorate his hope, that his obedience might be secured, in order to the enjoyment of the gracious reward, and that he might escape the threatened punishment. But alas! notwithstanding the said agreement was so advantageous in its nature, it was broke by our first parent, whereby all right to life, on the footing of law, was for ever forfeited, according to that covenant; and death, the threatened penalty, was incurred, not only respecting his own person but his posterity also. Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the

world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all, for that all have sinned ; Rom. v. 12. Through the offence of one many be dead, v. 15 ; for by one man's offence death reigned. By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men, for by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, v. 16 to 19. The apostle proves there was a covenant or law before that given by Moses, according to which the whole human race were under the sentence of condemnation, for until the law, (given on Mount Sinai) sin was in the world ; but sin is not imputed where there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression ; Rom. v. 13, 14. The law of Moses was not given that sinners might obtain life by it, for by the law is the knowledge of sin ; Rom. iii. 20. It was added, because of transgressions ; Gal. iii. 19, that the offence might abound ; Rom. v. 20, that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may become guilty before God ; therefore by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight ; Rom. iii. 19, 20. That no man is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for the just shall live by his faith, and the law is not of faith, but the man that doth them shall live in them ; Gal. iii. 11, 12. But whosoever shall *keep the whole law*, and yet offend in one point,

he is guilty of all; James ii. 10, for considering the law as a covenant, one sin destroys a title to legal life, and exposes the guilty to its awful penalty; for as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse, for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them; Gal. iii. 10. Deut. xxvii. 26. Believers therefore are not under the law as a covenant, their expectation of, and right to eternal life, does not arise from their personal obedience, nor in their hope of freedom from punishment founded on any compensation which they have made, or can make for their crimes; through Christ they are dead to the law as promising life, or punishing with death, they are neither under its promise or its penalty; their covenant connection with the law is dissolved, and a marriage to Christ commenced, that they might bring forth fruit unto God. See Rom. vii. verse 1 to 7. That real believers *are not under the law but under grace*, is an undeniable truth. But it is equally evident *they are not without law to God, but under the law to Christ*; that there is no contradiction in these scriptural propositions will appear if we consider the following things:

First, That by the term *law*, we are to understand the rule of moral, and likewise positive obedience. Moral obedience ariseth from our na-

tural connection with God, (as the author of our existence,) and with our fellow creatures, and consisteth in supreme love to God, and an equal love to our neighbour as to ourselves ; so that the whole law is comprehended in love. Moral commands arise from, and are founded on the natural propriety and fitness of things, and therefore are binding on all rational creatures in this world, and that which is to come. Whilst the relation continues between the creator and his creatures, their obligation to love him as the chief good, and to live to his honour as their ultimate end, can never cease, the law therefore by which such love and obedience are enforced cannot possibly vary. Jehovah does not demand our highest love, merely because of his authority over us, but because of his own infinite excellency and relation to us. He does not become the only proper object of our supreme love, because he hath commanded us so to love him, but his being the only *fit* object of our superlative affection is the reason why he requires it. The moral law does not make any duty fitting and proper, but declares and requires what is so. Moral commands therefore differ from,

Secondly, Positive appointments ; the latter arise simply from the will of God, and are therefore *alterable* in their nature, being altogether dependent on his pleasure and sovereign determination ;

the propriety of moral obedience, the light of nature, or right reason may discover. But no idea can be formed of positive obedience, but in consequence of divine revelation, the former is due from every creature, whether angelic or human. The subjects of the latter are particularly described in the holy scriptures. Thus the whole code of ceremonial laws was confined to Israel, as a shadow of good things to come, and was done away in Christ, who was the substance which these laws tended to exhibit, and the end in which they terminated. But the moral law ever was, and ever will be, equally binding on all; it being the rule of that love and obedience which Jews and Gentiles naturally owe to Jehovah, the supreme good and fountain of existence; and to each other considered as his offspring. Notwithstanding the ceremonial law under the Old Testament was accomplished in Christ, and done away by his death, he then as it were nailing it to his cross, yet many Jews who believed in Jesus continued much attached to the shadow, though the substance was come. The apostles therefore laboured to prove the abrogation of that law, by which those ceremonial observances became binding on the church of God, in the former dispensation. These appointments had been revered and justly esteemed, and they were to Israel very beneficial for two

purposes. To humble them under a sense of pollution and guilt and liability to punishment, according to the tenor of the covenant of works, to which they had a retrospect view; and to direct their faith and hope to the appointed Saviour and promised Messiah. The law was therefore to them as a schoolmaster unto Christ. But after Christ was come, they were no longer under a schoolmaster; Gal. iii. 24, 25. Those painful and tedious appointments becoming unprofitable, the great apostle laboured to convince these judaizing believers that they were not under that law. They were under no law as giving a title to salvation; for if there had been a law given, (of any kind) which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law; Gal. iii. 21, and the gospel would have been overturned, and the death of Christ quite unnecessary. With great difficulty were the Jews brought off from the ceremonial observances in the days of the apostles; therefore those inspired penmen in speaking of the church of Christ as delivered from the law, and those tedious, painful, and *now* unprofitable appointments, which were abrogated and done away, make use of the most contemptuous terms when speaking of the subject; *calling* them beggarly elements, carnal ordinances, &c. But the duties of the moral law are enforced by the strongest motives. In that law

Paul delighted after the inner man, and the charge of making it *void* through the faith of the gospel he denies with holy vehemence, and rejects the very idea with indignation. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: Yea, we establish the law; Rom. iii. 31. See a sermon on this text, by the Rev. C. Evans, intituled, *The Law established by the Gospel*; Dr. Gill on the *Law in the Hand of Christ*; and Mr. Booth's *Death of Legal Hope*, &c.*

Thirdly, From the universal extent of the moral law, the apostle proves that Gentiles as well as Jews were under sin, and therefore exposed to punishment, that a title to life could not arise from, or spring out of human obedience, because, according to the rule of righteousness, every one is found culpable. Being therefore condemned for dispositions and acts contrary to law, consequently by the deeds of the law no

* The ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper are of a positive nature, and dependent entirely on the will of God, as revealed in the scriptures of truth; there the subjects are delineated, the manner of administration pointed out and illustrated, the end and design of each ordinance explained, and their duration in the church till the second coming of Christ abundantly confirmed. The moral law, though distinct from, yet is connected with, and runs through every positive institution: whereby obedience to them is enforced on all those who are described as proper subjects, which believers would do well to consider.

flesh living could be justified ; a believer's title to life, and exemption from punishment, springing from another source. Therefore such are said not to be under the law, but under the administration of grace ; for the law is the ministration of death to every transgressor, and by its indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish are denounced against every soul of man that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile. But our dear Immanuel having fulfilled its precepts and endured its penalty in favour of his people, has thereby delivered them from deserved punishment, and given them a right to life, founded on his infinite merits. Believers are therefore delivered from the law as a covenant. From it life is not expected by them, nor by it death inflicted upon them as aforesaid, because they are not under the law, but under the powerful influences, encouraging promises, and copious blessings of grace. However they do not, they cannot from thence infer, that their obligation to love and obey God, is thereby diminished, but on the contrary infinitely increased.

If any professing godliness deny the law of the Lord as the rule of obedience, charity obliges us to hope their meaning is injudiciously expressed ; for some peoples *words* and *ideas* are *extremely unsociable*, and keep at a vast distance, and differ so much that a reconciliation is

scarcely ever expected. But those who deliberately maintain *believers are not under the law as a rule of life*, and act from such a principle, give full evidence that they are grossly ignorant of (not to say at enmity with) the nature of God, his government and gospel. A more pernicious sentiment, or a greater absurdity, was never invented, than the aforesaid Antinomian tenet. It tends to destroy every idea of good and evil, of right and wrong, by denying the existence or use of that by which the nature of thoughts and actions are tried and discovered. It renders believers incapable of sorrowing for sin, either as in, or done by themselves, or other christians. For where there is no law there is no transgression. It makes penitency an infallible mark of impiety, and delight in the law of God a delusion; it tends to prevent a believer from praying for divine direction, because, however he wander, he is never wrong, nor ever in danger of stepping aside out of the path of duty, being not obliged to walk in any. A believer must not pray to be kept from evil, lest it grieve him, for sin he cannot, do what he may, sin being a transgression of the law. Nor can he ask God to forgive him his debt, being confident he does not owe his Lord one farthing. Whatever may have been the case heretofore, he being now a lawless person, no demand can be made upon him. In

a word, antinomianism teaches a believer neither to fear God, nor to regard man, for according to it he cannot be guilty of offending the one, nor of injuring the other; for as there is no law, cruelty is not prohibited, nor kindness required; but truth and treachery, profanity and piety, love and hatred, are equally agreeable in believers.

But brethren ye have not so learned Christ, if so be that ye have heard him, and been taught of him as the truth is in Jesus, Eph. iv. 20, 21. You will not only rejoice in your relation to the Lord, but each believer ought to consider himself as under infinite obligation to love him, to obey him, and to adhere to him, becoming the nature of his connections with him, even as a subject to a sovereign, 1 Thes. ii. 12; Col. i. 10—13. A spouse to her husband, Eph. v. 23, 29. A soldier to his general, 2 Tim. ii. 3. A servant to his master, 1 Pet. ii. 16; Rom. vi. 16—22. And as a child to a tender compassionate parent. Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children; Eph. v. 1. We beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how you ought to walk, and to please God, so ye will abound more and more, knowing that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; 1 Thes. iv. 1; 1 Tim. i. 8. For, this is a faithful saying, that they which have believed in God should be

careful to maintain good works : These things are good and profitable to men ; Tit. iii. 8. And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity ; 2 Tim. ii. 29. Nothing is more evident than that believers are not under the covenant of works, but under grace. But what then ? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace ? God forbid ; Rom. vi. 15. Again, though darkness and doubts, respecting the moral law be removed.

Fifthly, Others are stumbled in respect of the Lord's positive appointments ; partly through the neglects of some, and the contemptuous manner in which others treat the sacred ordinances of the gospel, who are notwithstanding had in reputation for religion. Young christians are commonly much influenced by those they value, and have a veneration for, and therefore when they observe such, who have long known and loved the Lord, living in the neglect of gospel ordinances, they are ready to conclude, that for them to take the lead of such eminent christians would be rash and precipitate, and have the appearance of pride and presumption. They therefore through false modesty, or real fear, keep back from telling what God has done for their souls, and making a visible profession of Christ in his solemn appointments. By delays, their *zeal for Christ and the love of their espousals,*

are greatly abated, and then objections in abundance arise against its being their particular duty, on account of not having such a lively frame of mind as is thought necessary for such solemn proceedings. Thus through their neglects, others are discouraged and prevented bearing a testimony for Jesus, as he has directed those that love him should.

For the *relief, direction, and animation* of such discouraged believers I would propose to their serious consideration the following things :

First, The kindness of Christ in abolishing the vast number of ceremonial observances which were binding upon the church in the Mosaic dispensation, and which were to Israel difficult, painful, and very expensive, called therefore a yoke of bondage ; and as he has appointed only two positive ordinances to be observed by his followers under the gospel, viz. Baptism and the Lord's Supper, how ungrateful is it to refuse obedience, or a compliance with what is so mild, so merciful, when compared with what he made the indispensable duty of those whose privileges were inexpressibly inferior to your's.

Secondly, Though enquiring christians ought to regard the conduct of others, and are directed to go by the *footsteps of the flock*, and to be followers of them, who through faith and patience *inherit the promises*, yet none are to be imitated

further than they are followers of Christ, however eminent they are or may appear to be. The more eminent a man is for piety and parts, the more pernicious is his example when he is remiss in, or forsakes the path of duty. Perhaps some would have remonstrated against the detestable contrivance, to change Jehovah's glory into the similitude of an ox, had not Aaron, the saint of God and priest of the most High, entered deep into the design. But as things were, the people acquiesced with pleasure, and danced for joy. Had their elevation been a sure sign of God's approbation, all would have been well; for the congregation had a very comfortable time, a delightful opportunity till they were interrupted by Moses, who, though naturally meek, yet rebuked the transgressors with pungent severity. Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour, so doth a little folly, him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour; Eccles. x. 1. Therefore call no man master on earth, relating to sacred things. It is the example and authority of Christ, your master in heaven, who is Zion's king, which you are conscientiously to regard. You ought to love and respect all that love Jesus, but at the same time consider you *serve the Lord Christ*. And it is to your own master you stand or fall. To him *only are you accountable*. None can prove they

have a dispensation granted under his hand for the neglect or changing any of his appointments; and indeed none do plead for the power of granting indulgences in his name, save the man of sin, and those delegated by him. But even supposing others to have obtained such a dispensation, what proof can be given that *you* are included in the grant? Stand not therefore, O believer, waiting to see what this, or the other good man may resolve to do, nor perplex your mind about Christ's conduct to them. Think of Christ's reply to Peter when he was so inquisitive about his brother John, saying, *Lord, what shall this man do?* How keen, and yet how kind was the Redeemer's answer to the impertinent querist. *If I will that he tarry till I come, WHAT IS THAT TO THEE, FOLLOW THOU ME;* JOHN XXI. 22.

Thirdly, Consider, the divine authority is not to be trifled with. Two sons of Aaron were struck dead for daring to deviate from the Lord's command. And Moses the man of God had like to have lost his life, through his postponing a matter of duty, probably in compliance with the solicitations of his spouse. Perhaps you may be told by some that an attendance to such appointments is unnecessary as they are not saving ordinances. It might not be amiss to inquire of *such* people, what are saving ordinances? Where are they to be found? If none are saving, then

According to the objection, none ought to be attended to. No works of righteousness should be performed, because salvation is not of works, but of grace. It is astonishing such a mungrel maxim should ever be used by those who abhor *Antinomian liberty*, and *Arminian legality*, seeing the nature of both are therein united. It is the genuine offspring of those two very opposite and equally absurd sentiments. Has Jesus in very deed lost all his authority, that his appointments should sink into insignificancy? and has Christ done so little for his people, that they are under no manner of obligation, out of gratitude, to act for him? Has the love of Jesus lost its constraining influence? And ought christians to be really indifferent about serving God any further than they can merit by it?

Is the dying request of dear friends usually regarded by the surviving relatives? And shall not our best friend, our dear dying Immanuel, be listened to with cordial affection, when he appointed the supper ordinance, saying, This do in remembrance of me. Afterwards he sent from heaven by the apostle Paul, a renewal of his request to the churches. See 1 Cor. xi. 23. His ordinances are his palaces where he shews his glory, and feasts with his people, saying, Eat, O friends, drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved. Come forward then ye friends of Jesus

follow his example, and receive the kind memorials of his love. Once more,

Sixthly, Divine requirements being superior to the ability of men in their present fallen condition have been exceedingly perplexing to many. Such who feel themselves without strength, which the scriptures declare those to be for whom Christ died, Rom. v. 6, and to whom he says, without me ye can do nothing, John xv. 5, whose experience of their utter inability and absolute dependence on the Lord, coincides with what the apostle expresses concerning himself and his brethren, who were even able ministers of the New Testament. Their language is, Who is sufficient for these things? 2 Cor. ii. 16.

We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God, 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6. From a consciousness of personal inability, joined with a conviction of their absolute and necessary obligation to obedience, arise various difficulties relating to the *equity* of God in requiring that of his creatures, which he knows and declares, is not in their power to perform. To assert and maintain that men have an inherent power to turn to God and embrace the gospel, and glorify him in a course of holy obedience to his law, *without* the infusion of *super-natural principles*, is to oppose the *positive declarations* of God's word respecting the necessity

of regeneration, and the impossibility of those who are in the flesh, doing any thing pleasing and acceptable to God. See Rom. viii. 5, 8. But those who oppose the doctrine of free grace are constrained to plead for the power of man to love and obey God, representing man's inability as absolutely inconsistent with scriptural commands and exhortations to obedience and faith; these on the one hand declaim with an air of triumph on the absurdity of supposing God to require impossibilities; in which those heartily concur who hold the truth in unrighteousness, and represent men as quite blameless though disobedient, because they have no power of themselves to obey. Various methods have been taken to apologize for man's imperfections and extenuate his guilt. As men are naturally disaffected to God, it is no wonder they should endeavour to new model his government according to their different inclinations, in order to keep conscience easy, and support a pleasing expectation of future happiness without holiness; or being beholden to his clemency and grace. Every opposition to the gospel, every false scheme of divinity, agree in supposing the law of God naturally too severe; and that it ought to be, if possible, accommodated, and rendered agreeable to men's present condition; though they greatly differ as to the manner *how it may be accomplished.* And those who

think the law of God cannot be altered or explained so as to suit the carnal mind, and having an equal aversion to internal purity, as to the law which requires it; therefore plead for an exemption, and total deliverance from its hateful authority, esteeming it a peculiar privilege to settle if possible in the province of antinomianism; a state so far from God that the wretched inhabitants suppose his dominion does not extend to them. All false systems unite in proof of one important truth, which is, that till God's law be approved of as just in all its demands, and awful denunciations, the gospel will never be properly understood, and cordially embraced; which the following brief remarks may perhaps sufficiently evince, as well as prepare the way to a solution of the difficulty in question.

First, Some confidently assert that on the failure of man in his obedience, the perfections of God obliged him to *alter* the constitution of his government, so far, as that there was no need at all of Christ's death to procure an exemption from punishment. That *repentance* and *pardon* are connected by the law of *natural equity*. That Christ came not to make a reconciliation for iniquity, but only as a pattern of acceptable obedience, and to confirm his doctrine by sealing it with his blood. But, in confirmation of the truth for which he was condemned, Christ could have

prayed to his father, who would have sent more than twelve legions of angels to have delivered him from death ; but how then (said he) should the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be, Matt. xxvi. 53, 54, for without shedding of blood there is no remission, Heb. ix. 22. Admitting Christ came only as an example, will it not follow that the law which he came to obey required purity of nature, and perfect obedience, seeing our pattern was the subject of both ? If the law did not require perfect obedience, but *repentance* was substituted and accepted in its stead, and Christ came to set *us* an example *how* we might obtain salvation ; is it not natural to infer that in order to his being a proper pattern to us for *such* a purpose and end, he should have been *deficient* in his obedience, and the subject of *sincere repentance* ; and *thus* have demonstrated for our encouragement, and imitation, that though he was *imperfect* as we are, yet by being *penitent*, he obtained forgiveness of all his imperfections. This scheme it must be acknowledged so far as relates to *acceptance* with God, entirely excludes the necessity of Christ. He being neither a proper *pattern* to shew men *how* they might obtain salvation, nor its *procuring* author. However by such a rejection of Jesus the scriptures are fulfilled, which say, If there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness had been by

the law, Gal. iii. 21. And if righteousness came by the law, then Christ is dead in vain, Gal. ii. 21. If the death of Christ was entirely in vain, his laying down his life when there was no need for it, cannot be deemed an example *worthy* of our imitation, for no man however heroic has a right to throw away his life to no purpose. So far from its being virtuous, such a conduct would not only be imprudent, but extremely sinful. Can we suppose Christ came into our world on a *needless* errand, and shed his blood in *vain*? Yet shocking as the supposition is, it must be granted as an established fact, *if* there was any law existing which could have given life. For nothing could be more evident than that if men could have answered the demands of the law, there would have been no need of the obedience and death of Jesus, according to the reasoning of the great apostle, whose judgment in divinity few will care to dispute. This system therefore tends to *embarrass*, instead of solving the question, respecting the *equity* of God in requiring that of his creatures which they are now unable to perform.

Secondly, Some suppose the difficulty would be removed if it might be allowed that Christ by his death procured or engaged the father's love to sinners, so far, as to obtain a *relaxation* of that law under which they originally were, and esta-

blish a milder system of government suited to the condition of his rebellious subjects. But this plea is quite inadmissible, because, the love of God, from which salvation springs, was the *cause* of Christ's coming to die for transgressors. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, John iii. 16. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, that God sent his son into the world that we might live through him, John iv. 9. Hereby we perceive the love of God because he laid down his life for us, chap. iii. 16. Christ did not procure a new remedial law, because that *law* under which sinners *are*, requires perfect obedience on pain of perpetual punishment. Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them, and as many as are of the works of the law are under its curse; Gal. iii. 10. The law under which sinners *are*, is that according to which the world stands condemned as criminal at Jehovah's bar, and by the deeds of which no flesh shall be justified in his sight; Rom. iii. 19, 20. Those who think a relaxation of the law is obtained, ought to point out wherein the *abatement* consisteth, that men might keep in a happy medium, and not presume to go *beyond*, nor *fall short* in obedience to its precepts. Will the Lord indeed allow men to have other Gods *besides himself*, or to worship him in a way con-

trary to what he has appointed? Will he hold them guiltless that take his name in vain? May people now lawfully forget to keep holy the sabbath day? Has Christ released men from their natural obligations to parents? Or given them a licence to murder, to live in uncleanness, and falsely to accuse their neighbours, or covet what is the property of others? If moral commands continue in full force, as is abundantly evident from the New Testament, wherein then does the alteration consist? Does the law cease to take cognizance of the heart, and being *less spiritual*, is it therefore *more agreeable* to the carnal mind? If that be the case, how can *mental* acts be condemned by it, which the scriptures *positively* declare they are. Impure desires are by it deemed adultery; hatred, murder; and covetousness, idolatry; see Matt. v. 28; 2 Pet. ii. 14; 1 John iii. 15; Col. iii. 5. The language of christians in the apostolic day was, we know the law is spiritual, Rom. vii. 14. It is holy, just and good, Rom. vii. 12. I delight in it after the inward man, says Paul, verse 22, so then with my mind I serve the law of God, verse 25. The law of which the apostle spoke and in which he delighted was that which slew him, that commandment which was ordained to life, (but as a criminal) *he found* to be unto death, verse 10, 11. He *was delivered* from it as a covenant, but under

it as an unalterable law, verse 6, 7, as a covenant it became weak (that it could not give life to the sinner), not weak in its own nature, much less wicked, but weak through the flesh. What it could not therefore do in favour of the guilty, was done by Jesus, who did not blame the law, but justified and satisfied its demands, and condemned all opposition to it, even *sin in the flesh* ; Rom. viii. 3. The law under which christians are, requires truth in the inward parts as much as ever, and cannot alter whilst Jehovah remains the same : for God is a spirit, and they that worship him **MUST** worship him in spirit and in truth, John ii. 24. If then both the *matter* and spiritual *nature* of moral obedience remain the same, notwithstanding man's inability, it is evident the law by which obedience is enforced is not *altered*, and that a new remedial law is a *fiction*. Besides, if the law became unrighteous when its subjects became ungodly (which would be blasphemy to suppose) God would certainly have repealed it, and not sent his Son to honour an unjust law at the expence of his blood. Finally, If the divine law ceaseth to require perfect obedience, saints will at last rise in obedience superior to the law under which they are, for *The spirits of just men will be made perfect* ; and when so, they will love God more than he desires

they should, unless the law *rise* and *fall* in its requirements according to the *inclination* of its subjects, on which absurd hypothesis the notion of a *new* law seems to be founded. The gospel exhibits *new motives* to love and obedience, and graciously conveys *new principles*, in consequence of which saints yield to God *new obedience*, and by his authority attend to *new positive ordinances*, for *new* and *special* purposes; and are accepted of God, and approach him under *new characters*, in a *new and living way*; and are encouraged by *new* and *better* promises, in consequence of the *new* and *well ordered covenant* of grace, under which they are. But though he make *all things new* in respect of *acceptance* with him, and *enjoyment* of him, and *old things* pass away, in favour of them who inhabit the *new Jerusalem*, yet as God is the same without variableness in his own adorable *perfections*, *infinite* beauty and boundless *authority*, he cannot therefore alter his moral law, considered *simply* as a law, without giving up his claim to deity, because *moral* obligations arise from that *natural* connection and relation subsisting between *God* and *rational* creatures, considered as the *productions* of his power. Hence it is that no *alteration* in them can possibly *diminish* their obligations to him.

“ *Our revolt* was a practical declaration that

“ he was not by nature God, nor worthy to be glorified as God. To give up the law in favour of his rebellious creatures, must therefore be the same in effect, as for God to give up his own divinity, and ungod himself in the sight of all his dominions, to gratify a rebel*.” It is no new thing for professors of religion to show an inclination to *excuse* themselves and throw the *blame* upon God ; a certain wicked and slothful servant, when called to an account by his master, could say, Lord, I knew thee to be an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed, and I was afraid, and went and hid my Lord’s money ; Math. xxv. 24. Sinners in general think their case would not be so extremely bad as the scriptures assert, and they frequently fear, were they *fairly* dealt with. Instead of taking blame and shame to themselves, their powers are employed to find out other methods to appease conscience, and support hope, than that which is set before them in the gospel. Therefore,

Thirdly, Some apprehend the difficulty may be solved by supposing a certain degree of grace bestowed on all men, in order to enable them to perform what is necessary to the enjoyment of God’s friendship and favour. But the difficulty

* See Mr. Joseph Bellamy on the nature and glory of the gospel, page 21.

is rather *increased* than *diminished* by this contrivance. For,

If such degrees of grace be necessary to enable men to obey and render their disobedience *inexcusable*, it necessarily supposes, that unless such a degree of what is called *common grace*, was given them of God, they could not have been judged *blameable* for the *want* of obedience. If they were not *blameable before*, or antecedent to the supposed grace being bestowed, they certainly were not *liable* to punishment. And if not liable to punishment *before* they had this *common grace* conferred on them, how is this common grace an advantage? Seeing that *without* it they were *safe*, but the *possession* of it has rendered their state at best *precarious*.

Again, if such grace be given not so much for *their advantage*, as to *vindicate Jehovah's character*, which is by some supposed to be the design of it, (for men being not culpable without it, but in consequence of it, could have done very well had it never been bestowed, for where there is no blame, no punishment can in equity be inflicted.) But if this common grace, light within, or whatever name it may be called by, be given for the purpose of vindicating the character of God as a lawgiver and judge; it is necessarily *implied or pre-supposed*, that *without* such a *bestowment*, his conduct would have been liable to

■ *censure* and *impeachment*, and not at all capable
 ■ of being defended as equitable and just.

■ Farther, If without the impartation of the afore-
 ■ said grace, men would have had cause to com-
 ■ plain of *unfair* dealing, what is called *common*
 ■ *grace*, is, in fact, no other than a *common debt*,
 which God could not justly withhold from any
 man. Thus the doctrine of *common grace* repre-
 sents the Lord as neither *generous* nor *just*. It is
 the same as saying, if God will please to do us
 justice, we will out of complaisance call it *grace*.
 But, as a proof of esteeming what we call grace,
 a proper *debt*, and no real *favour*, we in our hearts
 verily account, and are bold to declare that *with-*
out such a *bestowment*, we should have had cause
 for ever to *complain* of *harsh* treatment. Thus
 it appears that all erroneous systems, however
 widely they differ, agree in tacitly charging God
 and his law with injustice in condemning for
 sin; and that the enmity of carnal men is such,
 that they cannot be reconciled to his government
 without certain concessions be made on his part
 to obtain *their* forgiveness of the supposed in-
 jury. However it is evident, that *approving*
 views of the *requirements* of God's law, are abso-
 lutely necessary, in order to *admiring* views of
 the *grace* in his gospel. For where *condemna-*
tion would be *unjust*, an acquittal is no *favour* :

and where obedience is not due, it cannot be justly demanded.

Fourthly, Another method of accounting for God's requiring perfect obedience of imperfect men, is the consideration of our being represented by Adam in the covenant, which was made with him. The reasoning of many eminent men has been thus :—" We had in Adam full and adequate
 " ability every way proportionable to the nature
 " and extent of duty ; and though men have
 " lost their power to obey, God has neither lost
 " nor given up his authority to command, there-
 " fore it is our duty to exert, not only the strength
 " we are now possessed of, but likewise the
 " strength we should have had, supposing our first
 " parent had continued in that state of purity and
 " power."

That Adam was the covenant head of his posterity appears evident from the scriptures, and I hope has been proved under another particular head. And that advantages and disadvantages naturally result from representation, according as representatives act in their public character, none I presume will deny. The covenant made with our first parent, was most certainly a righteous constitution, and had the condition been performed, we should all have admired, not only the equity, but the kindness of the compact. But,

as success does not make a transaction equitable; nor does a failure constitute a stipulation wrong, which is naturally right, we may rest satisfied, that it was impossible for an infinitely holy God, and an innocent creature to enter into an agreement essentially wrong. Therefore we ought to be for ever silent, in respect of censure and complaint.

Though this last-mentioned method of accounting for the Lord's requiring of us what is superior to our present power be less exceptionable than any of those before referred to, yet it does not seem to come fully to the point, or cast sufficient light upon the subject; for it seems contrary to the common or known rules of justice and equity to punish on the account of not performing, what is *naturally* impossible to be performed.

Hence some who have endeavoured to hold up the doctrines of grace as objects of ridicule and contempt, have boldly asserted, that according to these doctrines future judgment would be a mere farce. For that God might as justly punish slow moving animals for deficiency in swiftness, and those for not flying who have no wings to fly with, nor in any respect formed for such a motion, as to punish men for not doing what they cannot possibly accomplish, but is as much above *their power* as to create a world. Such kind of

checks the adherents to truth have frequently met with. And such reasoning, or rather declamation, has been very stumbling to several weak christians. Some have been severely tried by the above misrepresentation of gospel truths, and tempted to think what they dare not utter.

For the relief of such, I would propose to their calm and candid consideration, a distinction which seems necessary to be well understood, in order to obtain consistent views of divine revelation, relating to the requirements of God's righteous law, and the nature of his precious gospel. Which relates,

Fifthly, To natural and moral inability. By natural inability, is intended a want of a natural capacity or opportunity to know, and do what is commanded, or an absolute defect in the natural powers of a man's mind, or body, by which he is rendered incapable of acting, although his will were bent upon the performance of his duty. Whatever totally prevents, or is an absolute obstruction in the way of a person's knowing or doing any thing, which renders the acquirement impossible, though he be ever so desirous of accomplishing it, is what I wish to have considered as included in natural inability.

Moral inability consists in a disinclination to *what* is good, or a dislike of, and aversion to, *what* God has made a person's duty. That I

may be properly understood, I would further observe, that by natural power and ability is intended the possession or enjoyment of such powers and properties of soul and body, as are necessary for the purpose of mental and corporal actions, and being in a situation suitable for the exertion of them.

By moral ability is intended a suitable disposition, which consists in a holy inclination, a propensity of mind to what is truly good ; to illustrate and point out the propriety and utility of the above distinction for the relief of entangled minds, I shall endeavour to demonstrate,

First, That natural inability as above stated is not a criminal defect, and that,

Secondly, Moral inability is inseparably connected with fault, and cannot possibly be considered as an excuse or palliation of blame, but on the contrary, that a man is culpable, because of his inability to obey, or that criminality increaseth in proportion to the degree of moral impotency. That natural inability is not a criminal defect, or culpable deficiency, will perhaps appear evident, if the following observations be duly attended to :

First, Though men's powers of mind and body are no doubt greatly impaired by the fall, or the entrance of sin, yet the scriptures do not seem to intimate that *weakness* in either is sinful, they

are spoken of as pitiable infirmities, but never as punishable faults. Therefore it is written, as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. He considers our frame, and remembers we are but dust. Parents, by whose pity the Lord illustrates his own, know how to make the distinction respecting their children, and would be cruel if they did not. Supposing a son in the height of some criminal proceeding should break his legs, would it not be deemed cruel, not only to punish him for the criminal action by which he came by his disaster, but for his not walking, which he would be very glad to do if he could. Upon this self-evident principle of equity, Mephibosheth founded his plea when accused by his servant of disloyalty to king David his sovereign. He loved David's person and government, and he pleaded, that his not accompanying him in a time of trouble, when he fled before his unnatural son, was not owing to *disaffection*, but *Thy servant is lame*.

It is not the sin of the blind that they don't read the scriptures; nor are the deaf blameable for not hearing the sound of the gospel; nor the dumb culpable on account of their not pleading for God. Nor is it the duty of any to work or war with their hands who have got none. Nor *are any blamed for being sick, though it should be unto death*. The reason is, because they could

not *be*, or do otherwise if they *would*; though Paul's bodily presence was weak, and his speech contemptible, ye he did not consider himself criminal on that account; but rejoiced in his infirmities, yea most gladly rejoiced in them, that the power of Christ might rest upon him; but he did not rejoice in his sins.

Secondly, Deficiency or weakness in mental powers is not criminal, for was that the case, the weakest men would be the most wicked, and those who are superior in natural parts, would always excel in piety, which is contrary to fact, as founded on observation and revelation. Men are dead in sin, but that death does not consist in a *deprivation* of *natural* faculties. When rationality is absent, the words and actions of such people are never deemed punishable, because they are not accounted criminal. But if the fault lay in *natural* weakness, the *less understanding* and reason a person is possessed of at any time, the *greater* would be his *crimes*. And instead of not being punished for injuring others, such ought to be punished with greater severity on that account.

Thirdly, In regeneration the holy spirit does not create new *faculties*, or bestow a new set of natural powers, he does not produce "*a new head, but a new heart*," by infusing new principles and holy dispositions. But if a deficiency in

natural powers was the *fountain* of fault, or the source of blame, from whence criminal actions proceed, there would be a necessity for the production of new faculties, or otherwise a removal of their natural deficiencies. And if so, the surest evidences of a gracious change would be a strong memory, a fertile imagination, a fund of wit, and a profound deep understanding, or clear ideas and strong reasoning. In short an assemblage of fine brilliant parts, would in that case be the best proof of true holiness. And thus the devil might perhaps be admired for his purity; for according to that mode of reasoning Satan might be proved a delightful saint. No greater natural powers are necessary to love God than to hate him, to serve him, than to oppose him. Therefore God does not require more of any man than the right use of what he hath. And surely it is not *wrong* to require what is *right*. God does not require any thing unreasonable ; he requires only what he has a right to, and deserves, even all the heart, all the soul, and all the strength. He does not require in point of degree the like of all ; for to whom much is given of them he requires the more, Luke xii. 48. It is each one's *all* that he demands, he does not require his *creatures* to be alike strong in mental powers : he *never intended* they should. Angels excel in *strength* ; but he requires all his rational crea-

tures to love and serve him with all the strength they have. He could not require more with *equity* to his *creatures*, nor dispense with less in justice to *himself*. He requires nothing *naturally* impossible to be performed. He has not made any thing the duty of his creatures, which exceeds their natural ability, nor does he punish them for not acquiring or doing what is naturally beyond their power to perform. As men's natural capacities and situations are very different, he does not therefore require all men to be alike knowing, nor does he require knowledge above and beyond the means of information. He does not condemn those who have no revelation for not knowing what is only knowable by revelation, nor expect of those who have the scriptures to know a tittle more than is revealed by them. Hence, as to those things which are only revealed as matters of fact, that they are ignorant *how* they are, is not the sin of any man.—Though God exhorts to liberality, yet none are required to give liberally who have nothing to bestow. Duty is ever measured by natural ability; and where that is wanting the Lord accepts of a *willing mind*. See 2 Cor. viii. 12. Where the disposition is right, and the design or intention good, the want of ability to act as intended, exculpates the person from a charge of criminality *in that respect*. In a word, the good man is not

blameable because he cannot do so much for God as he would; nor is the bad man commendable, because he cannot do evil according to his will and desire. Many wicked men would be greater villains than they are, if they knew how. But though they have not ability or opportunity to act agreeably to their inclinations; none surely will commend them on that account. See Acts xiii. 12.—1 Kings viii. 18.

As commendation and blame, do not result from natural ability or inability, but from dispositions and voluntary acts, therefore Jehovah's conduct stands evidently clear from the imputation of injustice or cruelty, seeing his requirements are proportionate to, and are nothing more than a right use of the natural powers, and the privileges his creatures possess. His commands are not grievous in their own nature, whatever they be to our corrupt minds. They are agreeable and suited to the natural *powers* of men, however contrary and disgusting to their natural *inclinations*.

Secondly, If we attend seriously to *moral* inability, we shall discover thereby the awful condition in which men naturally are; and the absolute necessity of omnipotent grace to deliver them from a state evidently helpless, and truly *deplorable*. For, such cannot love God, nor contribute in the least to their own deliverance;

and yet their criminality is equal to their inability. A sinner while unrenewed by grace cannot love God, obey the law, nor embrace the gospel. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, Rom. viii. 7. The wicked *will* not seek after God : God is not in all his thoughts, Psal. x. 4. Such do not *like* to retain God in their hearts ; therefore *desire* not the knowledge of his ways, Rom. i. 28 ; Job xxi. 14. Yea, they treat him with scorn and disdain. Wherefore do the wicked condemn God, Psalm x. 13. They being the subjects of dispositions contrary to his holy nature, are therefore alienated from the life of God, and dead in trespasses and in sins, Eph. ii. 1 ; chap. iv. 18. The natural man is blind to the moral excellency and beauty of God ; to the spiritual glories of Christ, and his kingdom. He has no perception of the things of the spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned, 1 Cor. ii. 14. As unconverted sinners cannot be subject to the law of God, they cannot embrace the gospel. Jesus himself has declared it impossible while they continue in that state, saying, No man CAN come unto me, except the father which hath sent me draw him, John vi. 44. The spirit of truth the world CANNOT receive, John xiv. 17. Why do ye not understand my speech ? Even because ye

CANNOT hear my word, John viii. 43. Their ear is uncircumcised, and they CANNOT hearken. (The reason is added, not as owing to *natural*, but *moral* inability for) behold the word of the Lord is unto them a *reproach*, they have no *delight* in it, Jer. vi. 10. Their hearts are destitute of spiritual emotions, and compared to stone, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, even to the adamant, Zecl. vii. 12, which is harder than flint, Ezek. iii. 9, and which naturalists have said cannot be broken till steeped in the blood of a goat*. So then they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God, Rom. viii. 8, being under the sole power and dominion of dispositions *averse* to his nature and will.

They cannot love and obey God, till they are inclined so to do, and no man can be so disposed to love God, till he view him as an agreeable object. And God never was agreeable to a carnal mind, it being enmity against him, on which account it *is* not, CANNOT be subject to him, Rom. viii. 7. Such will neglect and despise God, while they continue to prefer other things before him. Those therefore who are lovers of pleasures, more than lovers of God, cannot possibly esteem him as the chief good, and unless he be loved as such, he is not as God, loved at all. Those who love the praise of men more than the

* Plin. Nat. Hist. Book 37, Chap. 4.

praise of God, CANNOT seek the honour which cometh from him only. For every one, if not prevented, will undoubtedly pursue what he prefers, or act according to his prevailing inclinations. Those therefore could not believe in, or adhere to the humble Jesus, who were ambitious of human honour. To such he said, How *can* ye believe which receive honour one of another? John v. 44. But some may ask, "May not such persons love God, repent and believe the gospel if they will." Answer, "Most certainly they may *if* they *chuse* to do so." There is nothing to prevent their doing so, wherever the gospel is published, but their own criminal dispositions. There is no bar in their way, but the wickedness of their hearts. Whosoever will are invited to come and take of the waters of life freely, Rev. xxii. 17. They have faculties or powers of mind adequate to what God requires of them. It is not owing to the want of natural ability, as before stated, but they have no *moral* ability to perform what is good, their impotency consists in an *aversion* to the things of God. When that is removed the difficulty is over. For, where God is loved, sin will be hated, Christ admired, and the gospel will be received and embraced, with cordial affection and faith. But while men are in a carnal state, they *cannot* chuse what is *spiritually good*, for that would suppose them capable

of chusing what they do not approve of, or of preferring what they do not esteem, but to which they have a fixed aversion. Whilst a person sees no comeliness in Christ, wherefore he should desire him, he cannot possibly chuse him as the chief among ten thousand,—his all in all; which believers do. Nor can he hate sin till it become disagreeable to him, nor sincerely seek the salvation of God till he feels he wants it, and knows its worth.

The question therefore should rather be, Whether any unrenewed person ever did, or possibly can, choose to love God, hate sin, and cordially embrace the gospel? For, if none while in that state or condition ever *did*, or *can*, make such a choice, a *willingness* in such a case is not supposeable.—If unconverted persons may love God, repent, and truly believe in Jesus, conversion would be needless so far as it relates to such well disposed persons, for true believing penitents shall be saved. And if so, such may be in heaven who never were born again, contrary to the express and solemn declarations of the Saviour, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God; except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven; John iii. 3, 5, 7; Matt. xviii. 3. And if unregenerate persons may love God, and obey the gospel, how, and by what,

are we to distinguish between those who are regenerated, and those who are not? If they cannot be distinguished who turn themselves, from those whose hearts are turned and changed by the Lord, the apostle's question to christian converts, *who maketh thee to differ?* would be quite impertinent.—We are taught by the unerring word, that there is as great a likeness to, and as close a connection between men's voluntary actions, and their internal principles, as between the nature of a tree and the kind of fruit it bears, or a fountain and its streams; Matt. vii. 16, 20; James iii. 11, 12. When a corrupt fountain sends forth pure streams, and thorns, brambles, and thistles, produce figs and grapes; when the whole course of nature is quite reversed, then and not before may we expect a carnal man to choose spiritual things.

But it may be replied, that as man is a free agent, he has power to choose *what* and *when* he thinks proper.—That man is a free agent cannot be denied, consistently with his being accountable for his own actions. Man's free agency consisteth in a power or capacity to compare ideas, and to give a preference to what appears, all things considered, to be most agreeable to himself. Perfect freedom consisteth in a man's acting agreeably to his own inclination, without *any compulsion* or restraint. A man therefore

being a free agent will act agreeably to his own mind, therefore free agency is a farther confirmation of man's moral inability. For, as divine things are in their very nature disagreeable to the unrenewed sinner; therefore as a free agent he will, and cannot but choose the contrary, as being agreeable to the desires and bent of his soul. If it be said, "Man has a determining power over his own will, and therefore his will acts as he directs it, and consequently he is capable of making a commendable and virtuous choice." This indeed is the dernier, or last resort of most sensible Arminians. It does not seem very intelligible to talk of a power over a power, resolving to resolve, or directing that by which a man is guided, and leading what he follows. However, granting all that can be desired, yet man's moral inability remains just as before stated. For supposing a man to direct his will what to chuse, he is sure to direct it to chuse that which he thinks is best, or what is most agreeable to himself. The choice theretore which he is supposed to direct his will to make, cannot possibly be in favour of true religion, while spiritual things are disagreeable to him; which, they will continue to be, as long as his heart is unrenewed by grace. For the first supposed act of his mind, by which *the subsequent act of his will is directed, must be according to the light in which he views the*

objects to be chosen, and while he does not view the glory and superlative excellence of divine things, he cannot give a preference to them, for that would be a preferring what he disesteems. And till he prefers them, he cannot order his will to choose them. Thus it appears that every wicked man is held with the cords of his sins; Rev. v. 22. He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he CANNOT deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand; Isaiah xlv. 20. That this awful state of moral inability and death is a blameable condition, or a criminal defect, will appear from the following observations :

1. It is voluntary and free. Men are not compelled to sin contrary to their inclinations : but the hearts of the sons of men are set in them to do evil; Eccles. viii. 11. Their language is, We have *loved* strangers, and after them *will* we go; Jer. ii. 25. As for the word, thou hast spoken to us from the Lord, we *will* not hearken unto thee; Jer. xlv. 18. Israel (saith the Lord) *would* have none of me; Psalm lxxxi. 11. I called, but they gave me no answer, all the day long have I stretched out my hand to a disobedient and gain saying people; Rom. x. 21, which walked in a way that was not good after their own *thoughts*; Isa. lxxv. 2, which said unto God, depart from us; and what can the Almighty do for them. Depart

from us, for we *desire* not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve him, and what profit should we have if we pray unto him; Job xxii. 17, chap. xxi. 11, 14. We *will* not have this man Jesus to reign over us. The result of their consultation against the Lord and his anointed is, Let us *break* their bands asunder, and *cast* away their cords from us; Psalm ii. 3. Now if men are accountable for any of their actions, they must be so, for those which are voluntary. *Involuntary* acts are not of a *criminal* nature; they do not discover a *bad* disposition. A good man (like Peter) may be bound by violent hands, and carried whither he would not. In that case, it is not his *fault*, though he be found in company with men of the most abandoned characters, being there *contrary* to his *choice* or inclination. A gracious person may possibly be delirious, and when so, or in fits of convulsions, may injure himself or his friends; as such, frequently discover the greatest antipathy to those whom they most highly esteemed when in their right minds; yet such actions, though very detestable, are never deemed *criminal*, because they are not then considered as effects of a bad disposition, but as proceeding from disorders in the animal frame. Acts of a nature much less violent and injurious, are accounted *punishable* when *there is* evidence they are entirely voluntary and

free, or arise from a *bad* design. Involuntary actions may occasion much grief when reflected upon; but a person cannot be said to repent of them, any more than a man can repent because he has not had proper perspiration, or a regular pulse. Praise and blame, rewards and punishments, are only connected with those actions, which are the fruit of internal volitions. Therefore no man will be punished farther than he is sinful, and no action deemed sinful which is not the effect of choice. Nor is any man praiseworthy whatever good may result to others from his conduct, if it appears that what he did was either the effect of *compulsion*, or with an *ill* design. Mordecai was not under any real obligation to Haman, though he was by him arrayed in royal apparel, and brought through the city on horseback, who likewise proclaimed before him, *Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour*; because what he did was *contrary* to his inclination or choice, being *compelled* through fear of the king's displeasure; nor were Joseph's brethren commendable, though they were instruments of his advancement in Egypt; because though they sent him thither, they *meant* it for evil. The devil's testimony in favour of Christ's filial relation to God, did not entitle him to *commendation* as Peter's did, though

* equally true, full, and explicit, because Peter's confession was voluntary, and his intention good. He meant thereby to honour his Lord ; but Satan's acknowledgment was either the effect of *constraint*, or done with a design to *sink* the Saviour's reputation. See Matt. xvi. 16. Luke iv. 41.

Hence it appears, that the criminal conduct of creatures is the effect of their choice ; sinful actions are voluntary and free. Therefore no man will be found more sinful than he chose to be ; and if any actions are punishable or commendable, it must be those which were voluntarily performed, and consequently the strength of a propensity to evil, or a moral inability to do good, cannot properly be pleaded in favour of sinners, or as an extenuation of guilt. But,

Secondly, Every apology in favour of delinquents, founded on moral inability, is not only absolutely inadmissible according to every rule of equity, but has a direct tendency to confirm the charge of culpability and to rivet the fetters of guilt. Men are naturally disposed to cover their transgressions as Adam, (Job xxxi. 33. Gen. iii. 12,) and fix the charge of blame elsewhere, and through confounding or blending the idea of what is *moral* with what is *natural*, they endeavour to keep their consciences easy in sin, from such like excuses as the following :

“ If men’s propensity to evil be such as that
 “ they cannot love and obey God, without being
 “ created anew in Christ Jesus ; they are rather
 “ the objects of pity than the subjects of blame ;
 “ therefore we ought not to be condemned for
 “ what we cannot help.” To make the soothing
 inference consistent, these words ought to be
 added ; i. e. *if we would*. Then it would be a
 good plea in favour of involuntary actions, or
natural inability, for none are condemned for not
 doing what they could not possibly perform *if*
they would ; but as it respects moral inability, it
 is just the reverse ; for the *prevalency* of inclina-
 tion, or *strength* of propensity to *good* or *evil*, is
 the very thing from whence degrees in each pro-
 ceed, and are inferred. Moral evil is that which God
naturally and *necessarily* hates, and *voluntarily*
 abhors. His propensity to *purity* is *infinite* and
invariable. He therefore takes no pleasure in our
 obedience to his own appointments when per-
 formed in a sinful manner ; he said to back-
 slidden Israel, incense is an abomination to me,
 the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assem-
 blies, I cannot away with, it is iniquity, even
 the solemn meeting, your new moons and your
 appointed feasts my soul hateth ; they are a
 trouble to me, I am weary to bear them (Isaiah i.
 13, 14.) As no man who is the subject of com-

mon sense will infer that, because Jehovah has an infinite strong *propensity* to purity and *cannot* but hate sin, therefore he is not *glorious in holiness*; or that because he *cannot* lie, *cannot* deny himself, therefore there is no need to resolve with David to praise *his truth*, (Psalm lxxi. 22.) Who then with the least regard to, or possessing any share of reason, truth, and decency, can thus plead? *I am not very bad, because I have a very great and constant aversion to what is good.*

If an intense love to sin, and hatred to holiness, do constitute innocence, or free from blame; those who are the *greatest* enemies to God and all righteousness, or most evidently to the children of the devil, are the *least* liable to punishment.

If disinclination to duty does free a person from obligation to obedience, a slothful servant would have an unanswerable argument in favour of his conduct, for he might say (and no doubt could give sufficient proof if necessary) that *he* never *loved* work in his life, that *he* always had an *aversion* to hard labour, and cannot yet be reconciled to it, being *contrary* to his inclination; and that to which he *always* found as far as he can remember, an inward *fixed* reluctance. He might add, Sir, when I find work *agreeable* to me,

I will attend to it, but till then, you cannot be so unreasonable as to blame me, seeing we are taught to consider that even in matters of religion nothing is duty, *farther* than there is a *corresponding* disposition. I love to look on, whilst others labour, and I hope you will allow me without offence to act according to my natural inclination. The haughty servant might likewise say, you will allow me I hope, sir, to do as I please, for I never did love *control*, I was always of an *ambitious* temper, and have even now a *strong* inclination and *intense* desire after *honour* and *authority*. I *wish* you would, and therefore I cannot but hope you will consider yourself in future as under my direction. Must the notorious thief be acquitted, because he has been long under the power of a strong inclination to injure his neighbours? or the murderer be deemed *less* guilty, because of his *cruel* disposition; were such a principle allowed, moral government would be overturned, every one might do as he pleases without liableness to punishment, especially those of the *vilest* dispositions. And *if* so, perhaps none would deserve *less* punishment than the *devil*.

But it may be said, " Our aversion to God has
 " been transmitted to us from our first parents,
 " and being born so, therefore we hope favour
 " will be shewn, as our personal guilt is thereby
 " *diminished*." Were pity pleaded for, on ac-

count of natural inability, or a natural defect and affliction attending either our mental or bodily powers, the reasonableness of the plea would readily be granted, and evidently appear. But sin is a *moral* defect, and cannot be committed contrary to a person's consent, or without a criminal inclination. The above extenuating plea is only a false gloss. Its genuine sense is the same as if a person should say when indicted for high treason; "I am, it is true, deemed a traitor, but I hope it will be considered as an extenuation of my crime, that I am the off-spring and *seed of evil doers*, my family in all their respective generations have been rebels against their sovereign. I have therefore only acted as they have done who are my progenitors. I hope I shall be favourably dealt with, as my disloyalty (if it must be so termed) is a family disposition. Besides, what I have done, arose from a rooted *enmity* in my heart to the *king*, his *adherents* and *government*, for which I ought not to be censured, as my *ancestors* always discovered as I have done, an inclination to *overturn* the constitution; and if possible to *dethrone* the sovereign, and bring *him* and all his *children* and *subjects* into perpetual *contempt*. And moreover, as my temper and disposition are such I *cannot* submit to his *authority*, nor be *beholden* to *his clemency*, having a rivetted aversion in my heart to what he is, has, does, and says. If therefore

my *own* enmity, or my *father's*, against the *sovereign* and his *subjects* have *any* influence to exculpate or diminish the charge of guilt, which doubtless *ought* to be allowed in my favour, I hope, according to the law of equity, my punishment, (if any be justly inflicted) will be very small." If it would be an affront to common sense, and contrary to every rule of equity amongst men to plead an *exemption* from punishment, on account of the delinquent's *vile* disposition, or that of his ancestors, how awful then is the deception of those who apprehend they *cannot* be treated by God as *criminals*, because of moral *inability*, or the *badness* of their hearts.

Besides, if the vileness of men's hearts, or their abominable dispositions, *free* them from blame, or *secure* them from punishment, they cannot account them to be *bad hearts*, seeing their *present* peace and *future* hope depend upon them. They are not it seems *injurious* hearts, but extremely *beneficial*, providing they be but *sufficiently* vile. Such persons would not know how to go on in religion as they do. They could not *sin* without *sorrow*, *hope* without *holiness*, *believe* without *evidence*, and *rejoice* in a thing of nought; but through the help of a bad heart. They do not think them *deceitful* above all things, and desperately wicked, and that for the *badness* of them they are *accountable* to God. They consider their

base hearts, and vile dispositions, as their *be* friends, which *justify* and *sanctify* their *omission* of duty, and *commission* of sins, as trifling. Tl gospel libertine, yea, the whole tribe of *indolent light*, and *trifling* professors, seem to consider as use what they call their *bad heart*, as a dark room or concealed warehouse, where they hope to *hide* their crimes, which as fast as committed, are removed thither in expectation of never being found or exposed to view, being secured by the *lock* *strong delusion*, under the care of *carnal confidence*, who carries the key of *presumption*, and lord of all the lumber.

But how very different are the declarations God, who says, *The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination*, HOW MUCH MORE, *when he brings it with a WICKED MIND*; Prov. xxi. 27. He has said in his heart, God hath forgotten; he hideth his face, he will never see it. Thou wilt not requite it. See Psalm x. 11—15. These things hast thou done, and I kept silent; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself, but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Psalm lvii. 21. Yea, also the heart of the son of man is full of evil, and madness is in the heart, while they live, and after they go to the dead.—But know thou that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment; Eccl. ix. chap. xi. 9.

To conclude,

It is hoped the above remarks may, through a divine blessing, help entangled Christians, respecting the following important particulars:

1. To behold and admire the equity and justice of Jehovah's government, in requiring nothing above the capacity or natural ability of his creatures; and yet continuing the equitable demand of perfect obedience, and not *altering* his law in the least, to suit the base dispositions of his rebellious subjects, which would have destroyed every idea of authority, and sunk the reputation of God.

2. The necessity of the almighty operations of the Holy Spirit in changing the bias and dispositions of men by regenerating, or creating them anew in Christ Jesus, and working in them to will, and to do, of his own good pleasure. For till the sinner's disposition be changed, till he be born again, and become a new creature, he can have no *true* love to God, no spiritual delight in his law, no approving views of Christ and his glorious gospel. And yet the change produced does not destroy the natural freedom of the human will; but he acts differently from *choice*, to what he did before.

3. By the distinction between natural and moral ability, sovereign grace is not only defensible against every artful attack, but it appears

infinitely great and absolutely free. In every respect it is truly wonderful, because those who are saved were not only miserable, but *inexcusably* criminal, and as such under the sentence of eternal death, from which there could not have been the least hope of deliverance had not *grace* provided relief. If the several parts of the great salvation be surveyed, even from its rise to its final consummation, it will appear entirely of pure grace, infinite, unmerited compassion, and astonishing mercy, which could not be the case if moral death was not a blameable state. Those who want to see the subject of grace, treated in a masterly manner, and set in a clear convincing light, I would recommend to their perusal a book, entitled *The Reign of Grace*, by Mr. A. Booth, London.

4. Thereby scriptural *exhortations to repentance and faith*, appear quite *consistent*, which could never be defended if *criminality* arose from *natural*, and not *moral* inability. For in that case, it would be equally ridiculous to call sinners to repentance, as to exhort a blind man to repent of his continuing so long in darkness, and never beholding the surrounding beauties of creation. And no less absurd than to attempt to convince the dead of the crime of indolence, for lying so long in the grave, when their help is so much *needed both for work and war*. While sin is

viewed as consisting in a natural defect, or a deficiency in the natural powers, penitency can never appear reasonable and right. For a man to pretend to repent, when at the same time he considers his fault to lie in a *natural* defect, which he cannot possibly help, *if he would*, is like a *deaf* man considering himself as exceeding *criminal* because he did not *hear to-day*, but is resolved he will not be guilty of the like sin *to-morrow*. It indeed seems to suppose, or require, a very great *defect* in a man's understanding, to be *able* to conclude, that such a repentance is what the scripture recommends, and the godly possess. But genuine repentance or sorrow for sin, appears from the consideration of *voluntary* depravity, *rational*, and every way fitting, because duty is not at all *proportioned* to our *moral* inability, or less binding, because of our *disinclination* to good.

5. The doctrine of natural and moral ability, is calculated to afford and administer much encouragement to seeking souls, and to comfort those who are really devoted to Christ; for as none *can* come unto him but such whom the Father draws; therefore spiritual *desires* after Jesus, and *delight* in religion, are *evidences* of a gracious change, holy dispositions, or a new heart.

You whose gifts are small. and natural power

are weak, be not distressed on those accounts. For real grace is much superior to the best abilities, and most brilliant parts. Therefore rejoice that the Lord hath shown you a more excellent way. — Who hath despised the day of small things? The profane world, and proud professors may; but God will not. Those who *love* the Saviour, to whom his person, blood, and obedience, are *precious*, and his ways pleasant, and whose desire is to walk humbly with God in the paths of purity; though they frequently stumble, and are often discouraged, yea though they fall, *They shall not be utterly cast down*; Psal. xxxvii. 24, but shall hold on in their way, and grow stronger and stronger; Job xvii. 9. For the strength and guide of Israel hath said, The way-faring men, though fools, shall not err. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away; Isaiah xxxv. 8, 10. Those who are not able to plead on God's behalf, but love to *think upon his name*, are precious in his sight. And, they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels; Mal. iii. 16, 17. Therefore fear not worm Jacob.

6. The *strong* believer, however enriched with *gifts* and *grace*, is thereby led to various humbling, and profitable considerations. However great his *natural* abilities are, he is as much under a *perpetual* necessity to look to, and rely upon the Lord,

for gracious influences, as those of the *weakest* capacity; for a person may possess *strong mental powers* and be *morally weak*. Grace may be *languid* and low, where *natural* gifts are *lively* and strong.

Whilst the christian is the subject of sin, and a propensity to evil is felt, he will see the necessity of perpetual watchfulness, repentance, and prayer, and often cry with holy Paul, *O wretched man that I am!* For though he is not under the sole dominion of sin, yet he feels and laments a criminal backwardness to good, and a proneness to evil. So that when he would do good, evil is present with him. He being the subject of two *opposite* dispositions, therefore he cannot do the things that he would. His resolutions are feeble, and his comforts fluctuate, because his affections are unstable, being sanctified but in part. Some times they mount to heaven and seem fixed on things above, but anon they drop down to earth and sense; and then he complains, and prays as David did, saying, *My soul cleaveth to the dust, quicken thou me*. He feels and is assured, that without Christ he can do nothing; yet that *inability* of which he is sensible, he does not consider, as an *excuse* for the neglect of duty, or commission of sin. He does not bless himself that he has got a bad heart, where he may safely deposit his *iniquities*, and thereby keep his conscience calm.

But the *sin* of his *heart* is the *sorrow* of his *s* and his perpetual plague. It is the *object* of hatred, and the *subject* of his secret and unfeigned lamentation : because the good man is taught consider *moral defects*, as *inexcusable faults*.

He longs for heaven, because it is a place of purity where he shall be free from sin, as we from sorrow. While in the body he considers himself neither *where*, nor *as*, he would be; there his desire is to depart and be with Christ which is far better. And as *he which testifieth these things* saith, *Surely I come quickly* : his heart replies, AMEN, EVEN SO COME, LORD JESUS.

THE END.

INDEX.

STUMBLING BLOCKS REMOVED RESPECTING

DOCTRINES.

	Page
I. Artful Objections to <i>Christ's Divinity</i>	5
1. From his inferiority to the Father.....	6
2. Perversion of Terms used on this Head.....	9
3. Pre-existence of Christ's Human Soul.....	14
4. Excluding the Body from being a constituent Part of Man....	17
II. Difficulties concerning the <i>Love of God</i>	23
1. Necessary hatred to Sin not inconsistent with sovereign love to Persons.....	30
2. The Objects of God's <i>natural Love</i> may through Sin become the Objects of his holy Displeasure.....	32
3. Good Men not equally the Objects of God's <i>natural Love</i> ..	35
Inferences,	
(1.) The damnation of such that kept not their first estate, wherein they enjoyed divine Approbation, not inconsistent with God's Immutability.....	36
(2.) Need of watchfulness against Sin.....	ib.
(3.) We are undone without sovereign Grace.....	ib.
(4.) Opposition to divine Sovereignty lamentable.....	37
III. Difficulties concerning the <i>Doctrine of Election</i>	38
Election used in different Senses.....	39
Reprobation not the negative of Election.....	45
(1.) Election not influential on the appointment of any to destruction.....	50
(2.) Nor injurious to those not included in it.....	51
(3.) Nor contrary to the moral Character of God.....	52
IV. <i>Union with Christ</i>	53
Visible (54), vital (56), virtual.....	70
V. <i>Relation to God. By Adoption and Regeneration</i>	67
VI. Difficulties obviated respecting the <i>Atonement</i>	73
1. It supposes God was injured.....	ib.
2. Man justly obnoxious to punishment.....	74
3. Innocence of him who makes Atonement.....	76
4. Yet Equity seems to forbid the punishment of the Innocent..	77
5. The Substitute must be related to the Sinner.....	ib.
6. No Creature has power over his own life.....	78
The Person of Christ answers all Difficulties.....	79
The Necessity of the Atonement proved by five Arguments.....	82
The Efficacy of Christ's Atonement not dependent on mere arbitrary Appointment....	86
Answer to the Objection from this Consideration, That Deity could not die.....	89

EXPERIENCE. Mistakes rectified.

I. As to a Sinner's Warrant to apply to Christ.....	94
(1.) That it is not the Duty of the unconverted to pray.....	95

	Page
(2.) That none can repent till they know that Christ died for them.....	97
(3.) That Faith is inseparably connected with knowledge of personal Interest.....	102
Any poor Sinner welcome, (103), to apply Nature of Faith....	105
II. Stumbling Blocks relative to the New Birth.....	115
III. Relative to spiritual Consolation.....	119
IV. Sense of internal Depravity.....	125
V. Hindrances from wrong Views of Doctrines.....	128
(1.) Doctrine of Imputation.....	129
(2.) Efficacious Grace.....	131
(3.) Doctrine of Election.....	133
(4.) Doctrine of Redemption.....	136
(5.) Perseverance.....	142
VI. Dark and afflictive Providences.....	144
(1.) Often mysterious.....	ib.
(2.) Good men liable to mistake Providence.....	145
(3.) Designed for our trial.....	147
(4.) Occasion of perplexity through mistaking Promises.....	150
(5.) Failure of Promises supposed to be particularly applied....	152
PRACTICE.	
1. Evil conduct of Professors (censorious).....	155
2. Loose Professors.....	156
3. The Cross and Persecution.....	160
4. False Assertion that we are in no sense under the Law....	164
5. As to positive Appointments.....	175
6. Stumbling Blocks owing to the Consideration of divine Requirements being superior to human Ability.....	180
(1.) The Law not altered in consequence of the Fall.....	182
(2.) The Death of Christ procured no such Alteration.....	184
(3.) No universal Grace necessarily superadded.....	189
(4.) Not a sufficient answer to say we had Ability in Adam....	192
(5.) Best answered by distinguishing between Natural and Moral Ability.....	194
Natural and Moral Inability and Ability defined.....	ib.
I. Natural Impotence not criminal.....	195
[i.] Such weakness not condemned in Scripture.....	ib.
[ii.] If the fault lay here, the less understanding or natural capacity was possessed the more criminal.....	197
[iii.] New faculties not created in Regeneration.....	ib.
II. Moral Inability criminal always.....	200
A Query answered.....	203
True state of the Question.....	204
Nature of free Agency.....	205
Arminian Objection answered.....	206
1. Sinful Actions voluntary.....	207
2. Apology from Moral Inability inadmissible.....	210
Infer from hence,	
1. The Equity of Jehovah.....	217
2. Necessity of renewing Grace.....	ib.
3. Freedom and Riches of Grace.....	ib.
4. Consistency of scriptural Exhortations.....	218
5. Encouragement to seeking souls.....	219
6. The strong believer is taught Humility.....	220







